

THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2010

IN THE CHAIR: GIANNI PITTELLA

Vice-President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 09:05)

2. Documents received: see Minutes

3. Transfers of appropriations: see Minutes

4. Implementing measures (Rule 88): see Minutes

5. EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013 - Future of the European Social Fund (debate)

President. – We apologise for the slight delay caused by the traffic. I would recommend that everyone walk to Parliament for three reasons. The first reason is to arrive on time. The second is because it is healthy. The third is that it causes less pollution. So, let us all walk to Parliament!

The next item is the joint debate on the oral question to the Commission, by Danuta Maria Hübner, on behalf of the Committee on Regional Development, on EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013 (O-0110/2010 – B7-0466/2010);

and the Commission statement on the future of the European Social Fund.

Danuta Maria Hübner, author. – Mr President, in the years to come, growth in Europe will be supply-driven. Sustainable and competitive investment patterns will be crucial. Cohesion policy is a major source of European public investment and must work as a catalyst for structural change by investing in research and innovation, resource efficiency, new and sustainable jobs and infrastructure.

It must not merely be a financial tool for investment. It is a policy that generates new resources, adding to growth potential. It will require an adequate macro-economic and financial framework to achieve its full impact. The key issue for post-2013 reform of cohesion policy is how to make it more effective in generating growth, jobs and competitiveness for the European economy in a sustainable way.

Social, economic and territorial cohesion is, according to the treaty, a basic principle of European integration. It must therefore be a policy applicable to all Europe's citizens, and not one restricted to the poorest regions. This is because it is not a subsidy policy based on the principle of compensation for the past, working as a supplement to national objectives, but rather a European policy for the future.

It must take into account the post-crisis territorial reality at regional level, looking for the most effective solutions to the challenges and opportunities of different European territories. It must be made an integral part of the implementation of the EU 2020 strategy and its flagship initiatives. We are intensely aware of the necessity to ensure that cohesion policy

and its cumulative effect over the whole territory of the Union is one of the key instruments which will enable the Union and its Member States to achieve the ambitions of EU 2020.

Cohesion policy must contribute not only to reducing productivity gaps generated by the crisis, but also to putting productivity gains on track. It must invest in better links between leading regions and those that are catching up. It must better exploit territorial cooperation potential. The Regional Development Committee of the European Parliament has reached a position as to how it sees cohesion policy post-2013.

Over the years, many parliamentary resolutions have stressed the necessity of maintaining a strong, comprehensive cohesion policy, well equipped with sufficient budgetary means to permit regions and cities to expand their development potential. In these exceptional times, we are convinced that they must all be encouraged and assisted to invest in ground-breaking ideas, in new technologies and in innovation. Regions and cities carry the key to re-energising Europe in order to overcome its extraordinary difficulties and to successfully achieving the transformation of our economy.

We hope and believe that the European Commission shares our resolve to ensure that cohesion policy remains the Union's major all-inclusive tool. It is therefore to afford the Commission the possibility of explaining its view of the future that we have tabled this question.

Johannes Hahn, *Member of the Commission*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner Andor, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to start by thanking Parliament for giving this topic such a prominent place on the agenda at a time when Brussels is having the last of its 'open days', with over 6 000 stakeholders in the city and more than 130 events and seminars intensively working on the issue of the relevance and the future shape of regional policy.

As has been said more than once, regional policy and cohesion policy need to be very intensively linked to the Europe 2020 strategy in future, including in the next funding period, so that we really do achieve the European added value that we talk about again and again and that now needs to be realised. It is important, in this context, that we coordinate Union policies better in order to truly deliver a common offering, an integrated approach, including towards the Member States. The keywords must be focus and flexibility. We must focus on a few priorities from the Europe 2020 strategy that are important to us and we need flexibility in the tailor-made solutions in the implementation in the regions and in the Member States.

I think it is also important that we develop a system of incentives that operate on the basis of clear agreements on objectives with the regions and the Member States so that, alongside proper financial management, which has been very important, and will continue to be so in future, the elements involved in focusing on results, too, are actually brought more strongly to bear. This is because it is absolutely crucial that, right at the beginning of a period, we also agree with the regions and the Member States what our objectives are and that we also agree on and lay down measurable targets and then strive to implement these accordingly through the projects.

Ultimately, one thing that can and should bring about good cohesion policy, with its varied elements, is being the engine of growth in the European Union. We have a Stability and Growth Pact. It is a cleverly put-together cohesion policy for all the regions, which ultimately bear the responsibility for ensuring that the growth element of the Stability and Growth

Pact takes effect, so that Europe, and its national economies as a whole, remain competitive globally and are able to further improve their position in the international context.

It will therefore also be necessary to adapt and develop the framework of support accordingly. What is required, in other words, is an increase both on the product side and also of the volume of finance involved that enters the realm of financial engineering, in the knowledge – and against the backdrop of the overstretched budgets of the Member States – that, in this regard, we need to do more to develop products for private individuals in order to co-invest in certain regional projects, in particular, those that also guarantee a source of revenue, so that we leave other funding available for projects that are just as necessary but that cannot guarantee any revenue in that sense, such as investments in the education and training sector, in modernising universities and laboratories and so on.

Over the next few weeks, we will be presenting, together, the 5th cohesion report and its conclusions. The report will put forward much of what I have been able to say in these few minutes, and much else besides. Regional policy, cohesion policy, however, is a kind of policy that is capable, including under the auspices of shared management, of making European policy something that European citizens can see and grasp.

Two million projects, as in the current period, can only be realised if we work together with the Member States and with the citizens in the regions.

László Andor, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, the economic and social situation in Europe continues to pose enormous challenges. Unemployment has risen sharply, with the rate expected to reach 11% at the end of this year. Furthermore, poverty continues to be a daily reality for many Europeans including children.

Whilst it is true that we are slowly emerging from the economic crisis, it is equally clear that our recovery needs to be based on solid foundations, and at this time, we cannot be entirely sure about these foundations.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the long-term challenges. Issues such as the ageing population, rapidly changing technologies, climate change and other environmental challenges all need to be addressed with urgency.

The European Social Fund has been the main instrument at EU level for investment in human capital and social inclusion. For over half a century, it has been a concrete proof of solidarity between European citizens and it should continue to be so in the future.

The ESF is one of the key tools at our disposal in reaching the Europe 2020 headline targets, particularly those on employment, education and poverty reduction.

We need full alignment between the ESF and Europe 2020 as it will be a major instrument for implementing the integrated guidelines. Our new Europe 2020 strategy sets out common objectives for the entire Union. However, Member States will choose their own individual paths to follow in order to reach these objectives with the support of the ESF. For this to happen, the future scope of the ESF should be broad enough to ensure that all Member States, regions and local stakeholders can design operational programmes that address their particular needs.

Nevertheless, a broad scope should not lead to a fragmentation of the instruments. The Commission and Member States should work together to establish core priorities, particularly on employment. We should work towards improving the visibility, effectiveness and delivery of the Social Fund.

The forthcoming budget review will show how the Commission envisages the future architecture of the Union's budget in order to achieve the political objectives agreed in Europe 2020. In addition, it will launch the debate between Member States and the European Parliament. I look forward to the contribution of this House to that debate.

The ESF should contribute to territorial as well as social and economic cohesion alongside other EU funds. This should be facilitated by establishing some common rules for all funds to make coordination between them easier.

The Commission has already made a proposal for a new financial regulation laying down some common rules and we will put forward some specific proposals in the course of 2011.

European citizens expect to see EU-level funds focused on results and achievements. We need to put in place systems to monitor the performance of the actions supported by the ESF and we need to think about moving to more results based delivery systems.

Access to the funds should be simpler and also more user-friendly. The discussions on the future of the ESF are at a decisive stage now. The messages we have received from you are very clear and will make an important contribution to the work that lies ahead.

The Commission will present its proposal for the new ESF together with the other structural funds by mid-2011. We have a clear mandate to support the Europe 2020 strategy, namely by using the ESF as its financial lever to help translate our policy objectives into reality on the ground.

Lambert van Nistelrooij, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, Commissioner Hahn and Commissioner Andor, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to see you seated here together. That demonstrates your desire to work together towards the overall objective of social, economic and territorial cohesion. I have also read the letter you addressed to Mr Barroso concerning cohesion as part of a single integrated structure and I trust that you will stand by that position. That would enable you to be more effective than if you were to go with an opt-out and allow the various funds to operate separately. Thank you very much for that.

These new, difficult, times call for a new policy. We can see evidence of that now in the Commission in connection with the Europe 2020 strategy. In that context, cohesion is at the very heart of the implementation process. The European added value, which is what we so ardently want the debate on our future to yield, is nothing more or less than a part of the implementation and is important for the 2014-2020 period.

What does this come down to? Do not give carte blanche when it comes to the European State aid map. Objective 2 must be retained, because it is very clear. Abandoning this objective would lead to a renationalisation of this segment of European cooperation and we do not want that. The Regional Development Fund and the Social Fund should continue to operate together.

My second point is that the horizontal, integrated character of the funds is vital for the entire spectrum of Europe 2020. Sure enough, the 'earmarking' that Mrs Hübner introduced for the Lisbon Strategy did work at the time. The Lisbon Strategy has been successful, especially in regional and urban environments, in bringing Europe closer together. European cooperation within and between Member States brings balanced territorial development in Europe a step closer and creates opportunities for all regions.

Finally, allow me to add that we must improve things. We must have greater synergy between the Rural Development Fund, the Social Fund, the Regional Fund and the Research and Development Funds. That is attainable and would lead to better results. I would like to put one final question to both Commissioners: do you want to introduce the Territorial Pact in the run-up to the Spring summit, as an opportunity for increasing the involvement of regions and towns? The Committee of the Regions has made a proposal to that effect and I would recommend that you consider it, at the same time as you consider the wording of our resolution.

Constanze Angela Krehl, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, in the European Union, cohesion policy means that we aim to lend our support to the weaker regions. It is an expression of major European solidarity. Solidarity, however, is never a one-way street, and my group therefore backs the principle that all the regions of the European Union must be able to participate in our cohesion policy. For us, this also means that we will not support any measures of renationalisation and that we do not want to see cohesion policy fragmented into sector-based policy approaches. We do not need any extra transport or climate protection or energy efficiency funds, but we do need to work on how we reconcile the challenges we face with a sound cohesion policy.

It is therefore clear to us that, alongside a strong Objective 1 area, we also need a strong Objective 2 area, and appropriate transitional rules. One thing is for certain, and that is that regions need our support at the European level. The European Union needs strong regions, too, and there is therefore a give and take in both directions. Of course, we need to review our priorities – clearly, we do need greater efficiency. My group is therefore four-square behind the proposal, in order, for example, to be able to coordinate rural development much better together under the umbrella of cohesion policy than in the past.

Of course, we also back improving infrastructure, supporting businesses and supporting sustainable economic development. However, sustainable economic development is only possible if we bring the employed – the people – with us. In other words, we need employment policy approaches, we need education, we need training, we need people to integrate into the labour market. That, in turn, is only possible in collaboration with the European Social Fund, under the umbrella of cohesion policy. We support this, but with dedicated rules, which there did used to be in the past. We need to really make an effort to improve this and significantly strengthen the social side of cohesion policy.

In the forthcoming discussions and negotiations, my group will be going in to bat for improving and simplifying the usability of the fund. We need a simplification of the application processes so that, first of all, fewer errors are made, and, secondly, so that access for those people who really want to work can be made easier through this European cohesion policy. We will strive to ensure that, in these negotiations, a stronger partnership principle really is implemented. I believe that Parliament's role has been strengthened now that the Treaty of Lisbon is in force. My group will be arguing the case for this partnership principle.

Nadja Hirsch, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, I think it is right and proper for us to be championing the cause of a coordinated cohesion and regional policy. This is extremely important in order to deliver efficiency and to be able to use the money well, despite the limited amounts in question. I must warn, however, that the plan is to achieve this efficiency by applying one and the same set of rules to everyone. The funds are very

varied, have very different target groups and different contents. With that in mind, coordination is very important but the same rules are not.

That is exactly what we are experiencing with the European Social Fund at the moment, which is to say that it would be extremely well received by just those little communities, municipalities, if – just as the speaker before me said – for these small bodies on the ground, in particular, such an enormous amount of time and effort did not have to be spent in order to actually be able to access and use this money. That is exactly what we need though, as unemployment, poverty and socially excluded people are to be found in every Member State of the European Union, not just in certain regions, but in every Member State.

With that in mind, I find it particularly important that the European Social Fund, in particular, should truly continue to be available to minorities, which, to an extent, also includes young people, but also the elderly and often people from an immigrant background, in future and actually, that it should be more available, in order to give these people the chance to enter the labour market, as that is precisely what we are aiming to achieve. The Europe 2020 strategy represents our attempt to achieve greater inclusion in the labour market for the different groups. I hope that that will not remain simply a goal; instead, we now have to genuinely provide the measures and the instruments to achieve it. The European Social Fund is a very effective tool in this regard. We just need to optimise it and, above all, make it useable.

Elisabeth Schroedter, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased about this debate as it represents a first attempt for us to reach compromises on a very major project that will occupy us for the next few years. The most important thing in these compromise resolutions of the European Parliament is the discrete nature of the cohesion policy and a clear commitment to that. It will play its part in the Europe 2020 strategy, but it also has its own value, as it is cohesion policy that holds the EU together, at its core. No region in the European Union is shoved to one side. Social cohesion also means that no one, from the poorest of the poor, is pushed aside in the European Union, and instead, everyone is given a chance.

However, prosperity does not just mean economic growth, as we have seen in the past how there can be a growth of GDP in many regions, but an intensification of social differences at the same time. I therefore consider it very important that, in this resolution, the impetus is given for us to develop other important criteria alongside the GDP that make it clear what prosperity means and what needs to be done in a region.

We in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance are very proud of our achievement in having this fixed in the resolution, even if only cautiously. We propose that the criterion is one which includes examining whether it is possible to support a region or not. That would result in a very different picture.

Thus, the resolution comes out very clearly in favour of a ‘GDP beyond’ and we hope that the Commission takes up this stimulus. That also means that we will finally get away from one-sided development. A further Commission study – namely, the Commission’s Regions 2020 study – shows that climate change has an alarming and detrimental impact on regional development. We therefore need to stop it. The study shows that a third of the population of the European Union would have to abandon their homes if we failed to stop climate change, as they would either be unable to find work or to live in their homes any longer. This makes it clear that there are three sides to regional development. All three of these sides must be given equal weight in the future reform of the structural funds and also taken

into consideration in the support given. One key interest is economic, social and territorial cohesion. That means that ecological issues and criteria, too, represent a key element in the prosperity of regions.

Allow me to briefly enunciate one more thought about what has been negotiated here between Members, namely, the wording about how the ESF is to be dealt with in the joint package. I believe that the oral amendment is well worded and allows us a great deal of free scope and I therefore ask you to support it.

Oldřich Vlasák, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (CS) Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, in the discussion on future cohesion policy, we are all, first and foremost, defending our own interests. For this reason, it will be very difficult to find a meaningful and rational consensus that will win the support of as many Members as possible. In my view, the first key question is what financial resources we should allocate to the cohesion policy. Personally, I am convinced that existing resources are more or less sufficient. The cohesion policy should, however, become one of the main spending priorities of the European budget. As the European budget is constrained, and Member States have seriously ailing public finances and cannot allow more money to be sent to Brussels, it is also necessary to state clearly where cuts might be made. In my view, this includes, for example, direct payments to farmers, money for the globalisation fund or the administrative costs of European institutions.

The second key question is what we should finance from the European funds. In the draft resolution on the European Social Fund, much is being said about the fight against poverty, support for the social model, etc. That is all very well, but in the first place, our economy must prosper, people must have work, and companies must produce and provide services. Therefore, European funds should be geared towards investment, and not consumption. The funds should make possible modernisation which, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, cannot be taken on by the state, the regions, communities or families. Reducing the economic disparities between regions and Member States must continue to be the main goal of the cohesion policy. Therefore, the only rational criterion is the level of GDP.

On behalf of my group, I can say that we are interested in a cohesion policy that will be comprehensible, simple, flexible, unencumbered by excessive bureaucracy, and focused on investment and smart growth.

Gabriele Zimmer, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, I would like to draw attention to a fundamental conflict which is already becoming apparent in relation to the European Social Fund (ESF). The Treaty of Lisbon recommends that the ESF should focus primarily on active labour market policy. We in the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left believe that it is necessary for the ESF to be applied more broadly in future to general social policy and, most importantly, to be used much more effectively to combat poverty and social exclusion.

In future, the European Social Fund should also play an effective role throughout the entire European Union and should not concentrate solely on specific regions. However, we think that there should be a greater focus on special problems in the regions, which could be accommodated more effectively via the cofinancing rates. Financing for the European Social Fund should at least stay at its current level. It should be a minimum of 1% of the gross budget of the European Union. We believe that to be absolutely essential.

I would like to highlight one other problem. The proposed increased focus on the results naturally gives rise to the question with regard to the ESF of which indicators and benchmarks will form the basis for evaluating the results and what that ultimately means in terms of preparation for the project promoters in each case. These promoters do not have reserves which would allow them to make additional payments or repayments. If the ESF is to remain in existence and play an effective role, we need to have a clear overview of this issue in advance.

John Bufton, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, it has been suggested that the Commission will withdraw regional development funding to all but the most economically weak areas of the Union post-2013 by removing Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective funding.

Although many areas of Wales benefit under the Convergence Objective, reflecting the country's economic shortcomings, as many as seven Welsh regions are now threatened with losing EU money.

EU funding to Wales, currently worth GBP 280 million, could be withdrawn. Financial support to numerous projects created under the auspices of the Regional Competitiveness Programme could be stripped, threatening thousands of associated jobs.

Has the Commission thought, at the very least, to draw up an impact assessment to judge the social and economic consequences of cutting funds? What transitional measures are being proposed? Spending on debt-ridden eurozone countries, including Greece, was pursued with little hesitation and amounts to a trillion euros over three years.

Wales also suffers high unemployment levels and will be greatly affected by forthcoming UK Government civil service cuts. Another threat to Wales could be the proposed renationalisation of structural funding, which could see Britain undersold on entitlement to support.

The UK, as a net contributor, would likely be expected to bear the heaviest fiscal burden. The EUR 55 billion spent on regional competitiveness and employment funding account for just 6% of the entire EU budget. The UK will continue to pour increasing amounts of money into Brussels, yet the one area where some of that money is recouped – albeit very little – is the area the Commission are looking to axe.

It is, of course, my opinion that the people of Wales would be better off if the UK left the EU. That way, we could save billions and be the sole dictators of where much-needed financial provision is channelled.

Pascale Gruny (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, we have reached a pivotal moment in the debate on the future of the European Social Fund (ESF). At a time when employment has become the number one preoccupation of all countries and all European regions, I am proud of the resolution Parliament has proposed today on the future of the ESF. This text is responsible, concrete and opens doors to the future. Now more than ever, our territories need a cohesion policy and thus, support from the European structural funds. The ESF has been in place since 1957 and was established by the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, the Treaty of Rome. Its legitimacy is not in doubt.

My position on the future of the ESF is simple and clear and can be summarised in three points.

First, a European Social Fund must remain focused on employment, combating poverty, of course, but by getting people into work and not by other means. Today, employment must have our full attention and must be our priority. I am convinced that a person who returns to employment is also a person who regains his human dignity.

Second, an effective European Social Fund must have clear, pragmatic rules that do not discourage operators. That is why I support my political group, which is calling for greater visibility for the ESF, particularly to improve its uptake. Just imagine, budget allocations are sometimes returned unused to the European Union, while unemployment rates have never been so high.

Third, and finally, we need a fund that is included in the broader framework of a strong European cohesion policy. Decisions must be taken on the ESF with partners that are as close to the ground as possible. Commissioners, can you assure us that the ESF will meet these expectations?

Pervenche Berès (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, thank you for this opportunity to debate before the Commission deliberates on these proposals. Employment, poverty, the economic, financial and social crisis in the European Union, and the subsequent austerity measures in the budgets of the Member States, force us, at European level, to fully address the issues of employment and social policies and to regard the European Social Fund (ESF) as a tool of EU economic policy and the EU budget for meeting not only the treaty objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion but also the objectives of the strategy, the draft of which the Heads of State or Government have just accepted, which include increasing the employment rate and combating poverty.

In this context, with the ESF now under review, I would like to send out some signals to Commissioner Andor. We think that the regions are the effective authorising bodies of European public expenditure. However, that does not mean that the instruments of economic policy must be reduced to the imperative of territorial cohesion. Cohesion also includes economic and social cohesion. It may be scheduled by the regions, but it must meet economic and social objectives that concern all parts of the European Union. Commissioner, when you review these rules, I urge you to take account of the experience gained in the implementation of the Globalisation Adjustment Fund, where the capacity exists for individualisation and for adaptation to each of the workers concerned, which may also be useful for the European Social Fund. I also urge you to link in some of the objectives of our Europe 2020 strategy: employability, employment, the fight against poverty, and research and development. Research and development is certainly very important for Galileo and others. Commissioner, as regards social innovation, there is an immense wasteland, which I urge you to explore using the ESF with, no doubt, in this case, somewhat different cofinancing deals. I fully endorse what Mrs Zimmer said: employability cannot be the sole objective of the ESF. There is also the question of combating social exclusion and taking into account the most vulnerable sections of the population – the young, women, people with disabilities and the Roma population, to name but a few.

Finally, Commissioner, I would like to say a word on the conditions of use of the ESF. We know everyone says: 'There is Kafka in the home, there is Kafka in Brussels.' There are rules for the use of the ESF which are too difficult to implement. Therefore, let us think about a kind of geometry which varies depending on the quality of the use of public expenditure by the regions. Where regions are happily capable of being authorising bodies, let us relax control. Where there is a need for administrative support, let us invent new mechanisms.

And, finally, as regards the return of the money that is not used in the budgets of the Member States, I urge you to imagine abolishing this rule, which is not the right way to use the European Social Funds to further employment and social inclusion.

Ramona Nicole Mănescu (ALDE). – (RO) Social inclusion is a particularly important topic which is well integrated into regional policy. As we are all aware, it entails much more than simply job creation.

The resolution on the European Social Fund emphasises the role it plays in achieving the EU 2020 strategy objectives. Without regional policy instruments, this strategy has no chance of being successfully implemented at national, regional or local level. As a result, as long as regional policy and social policy are interconnected policies which operate successfully together, I believe that we should not agree, under any circumstances, to the separation of the European Social Fund from the Structural Funds.

Such a decision would pave the way for funds to be allocated on a sectoral basis, thereby creating an undesirable precedent for this.

The European Social Fund must remain part of the Structural Funds, especially as it has proven its effectiveness in every region of Europe, given that it is actually a key weapon in the battle against the economic crisis, in addition to the European Regional Development Fund.

We need a strong, well-funded EU regional policy in order to achieve social, economic and territorial cohesion. I therefore believe that the regional aspect must continue to enjoy its appropriate place as part of both the revised EU budget and the future budget.

We must reject any attempt at renationalisation. The regional policy is not a charity policy, but an EU policy intended for all regions, which will generate economic growth, innovation and competitiveness, making it an instrument available to every Member State. If we want solutions which are appropriate to the needs and realities which we are going to face in the future as well, we must maintain the same framework. By that, I mean both the basic principles and the sums allocated.

Jean-Paul Basset (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, I should like to draw your attention, ladies and gentlemen, to an aspect of this resolution, which is of central and not secondary importance to me, and which can give the policies of regional cohesion their full meaning. The challenge is to identify the best instrument to enable us to measure the state of development of the European regions as accurately as possible and to have at our disposal the best decision support instrument, especially for deciding on eligibility for European funds. It is about having a political compass to guide us towards this ‘targeted approach to territorial development’, to quote the proposed resolution, towards this integrated approach. What is this guide on which to base our regional cohesion policies? Today, we have just a single indicator, gross domestic product, which is an excellent indicator and an excellent instrument for measuring economic growth and the production of wealth. However, regional development issues are not confined to increasing gross domestic product. People’s well-being cannot simply be expressed as an index or a curve. If it could, we would be in danger of ending up with an indicator that gives nothing more than a distorted, partial and therefore one-sided view. To pursue regional cohesion policies that are relevant to the objective of the sustainable development of the regions – which, I would point out, is our shared objective – the gross domestic product index must be supplemented by other instruments of measurement, particularly in the social and environmental spheres.

It must be possible to assess the level of unemployment, insecure employment, education, health, environmental quality, air and water quality, protection of resources, access to basic services, etc. In conclusion, therefore, we need to do our utmost to establish, alongside gross domestic product, a battery of social and environmental indicators to facilitate regional cohesion policies whose aim is sustainable development based on the three pillars of economic factors, social factors and the environment.

Elie Hoarau (GUE/NGL). – (FR) (*started off-microphone*) ... has more than 250 regions in its 27 Member States. Not all of these regions are homogeneous. There are major differences between them in terms of wealth, development and standard of living. To reduce these differences and to make the regions more competitive, the European Union implemented a regional cohesion and convergence policy based on solidarity and endowed with the appropriate financial resources: the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the cohesion funds. Nevertheless, despite the progress made, it would be illusory to believe that these differences will disappear in 2013, or even in 2020. Consequently, it would be advisable to maintain the principles of cohesion policy and the accompanying financial resources beyond 2013. Naturally, this regional cohesion and convergence policy must be pursued alongside other strategies, such as the EU 2020 strategy. However, it must be pursued independently of this strategy and we must ensure that it does not appropriate or absorb any of the funds allocated to cohesion policy under the pretext of regionalising a specific objective of the EU 2020 strategy. Parliament must maintain a watchful eye on this, as it is essential for all regions, particularly those that are lagging behind, notably the outermost regions.

Giancarlo Scottà (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, future regional and cohesion policy must be aligned with the Europe 2020 strategy priorities, and therefore it must be focused on the objectives of sustainable growth, social inclusion and employment. It needs to support the effective development of the European regions by levelling out the differences between them and enhancing the specific characteristics of the more marginalised areas which are still facing regional development challenges.

The projects must take into account the less developed regions, which have been most severely affected by the crisis. New challenges such as population density in certain areas and depopulation in others, in mountain areas, in particular, along with climate change, must be addressed through concrete actions that strengthen local and regional involvement. The multi-level approach must stimulate the integrated development of disadvantaged areas by involving local and regional authorities as well as civil society.

I urge the Commission to take into account the specific characteristics of each region, namely the regional dimensions of the various levels of development, and to simplify the management and control procedures for financed projects in order to ensure their effective and prompt execution.

Dimitar Stoyanov (NI). – (BG) This topic is particularly important for me, as five of the six Bulgarian regions are in the top 10 poorest regions in the European Union. The reason for this is that those who led Bulgaria into the European Union misled the nation into thinking that as soon as Bulgaria joined, billions in assistance from European funds would come raining down on the country. We all know that this has not been the case. Those same people were hoping to get their people into key positions to cream off commissions from the appropriation of European funds. Now that the Bulgarian people have voted them out of office, there is nobody to step forward and take their place to help Bulgaria

absorb European funds effectively. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a reluctant admission but Bulgaria is a new country. It cannot measure itself against France, Germany and the other founder members. We need your know-how to enable these policies relating to these funds to reach the people for whom they were intended, and for there truly to be a policy of convergence.

Markus Pieper (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, today we have seen fundamental agreement across all the groups in Parliament. We want a strong cohesion policy and structural policy in all the European regions. It does not matter whether we are talking about a net contributor or one of the poorer Member States; structural policy remains the strongest expression of European solidarity. We are helping the poorest regions to catch up with their neighbours, but we are also helping the stronger regions to remain competitive. Europe will only be able to develop sustainably in areas such as environmental protection, industry and energy supplies, and to conquer global markets, if it can make the best technologies even better.

To ensure that we achieve these objectives, we need clear and fair rules. This means that the poorer regions must remain the central focus of cohesion policy. The lower the gross domestic product (GDP) of a region, the more help it must receive from us. Anyone who questions the use of GDP as an indicator, such as the Greens and, unfortunately, some Liberals and Socialists, is attacking the very roots of European solidarity. GDP is the guarantee that social force, education and job opportunities are fully taken into account. Poor regions often cannot provide all these things on an adequate level and they also lose out when it comes to protecting the environment. Therefore, GDP must remain the reliable indicator for regional policy.

We need to rely on our local authorities and federal states when it comes to regional policy. We want to implement the Europe 2020 strategy on the basis of the tried and tested principle of the joint development of programmes, joint administration and regional cofinancing. For this reason, the calls for independent EU funds for employment, climate protection and energy must not be allowed to become reality. If we were to replace regional policy with a stronger sectoral policy, the only winners would be new EU agencies, and our local authorities and federal states would be mere onlookers with regard to regional policy and cohesion policy.

I am very pleased that the European Parliament has taken up a clear position on behalf of the regions. This has to do with accepting the European idea. We cannot force people to accept it. The acceptance has to develop from the bottom upwards as part of regional policy.

Alejandro Cercas (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, in the next few months, we are going to have to discuss and decide upon the future organisation of the Structural Funds, which are essential for bringing us out of the crisis and tackling the Europe 2020 strategy.

I think that when the time comes, it will be important to learn from experience and uphold two decisions: the decision to maintain the European Social Fund (ESF) within the body of basic rules regulating the Cohesion Fund and cohesion policy, but also, at the same time, the decision to maintain the objectives, rules and budgets of the ESF without distorting them.

Why is this? It is because, ladies and gentlemen, the ESF needs to continue to provide training, and to prepare workers for entering the labour market and for social cohesion, as that is why it was created.

We need it now and we will need it in the next few years, and not only for building roads. This is because Europe's main assets are its people, and if the EU wants to play a role and maintain its social model, it will have to continue to train its people. We cannot use our resources any better than if we use them for the purpose for which they were created. This does, however, have to be done within the overall structure, working in a balanced way with synergies within territorial cohesion policy.

Marian Harkin (ALDE). – Mr President, Article 4 TFEU lists the competences shared between the Union and the Member States. After the internal market, social policy is the next on the list, followed by economic, social and territorial cohesion. That gives an indication of the priorities in the treaty.

Following on from that, Article 9 clearly states that in defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union should take account of requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health. This issue is highlighted in Article 10 of our resolution on the future of the Social Fund and is, to me, of crucial importance.

That gives us our framework. I agree with many of the speakers who have argued that we need a framework to establish synergies between all European policies and the Structural Funds. Indeed, these must act as drivers that will help us to achieve the EU 2020 targets.

I also agree with Commissioner Andor when he says that EU citizens expect results based delivery systems. There is also a strong argument for greater visibility of these funds, and an urgent need for simplification.

I regularly speak to voluntary, community, and other groups who access these funds. They have serious issues with the levels of bureaucracy and red tape that confront them. But it is not just that usual red tape: there is also uncertainty over interpretation of the rules and regulations.

We have discussed this issue of simplification again and again in committee and in plenary, and yet nothing has changed for the better. In connection with rules and regulations, a colleague recently asked me why there is an insistence on 'pouring sand into every moving part'. Given that context, this issue really needs to be dealt with. Perhaps we can begin to get it right this time.

Finally, I would once again like to emphasise and ensure that Article 9, or the 'social clause', permeates all our policy decisions, because that really will lead to cohesion in the EU.

François Alfonsi (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, I would like to express, first of all, our commitment to regional development policy. We consider the region to be the appropriate level at which to structure European economic policies. Indeed, it has a natural ability to withstand globalisation and, consequently, to sustain employment and ensure its fair distribution throughout Europe. Secondly, territorial cohesion policy must, in our view, form part of the long-term future. The threshold of 75% of GDP will naturally be renewed in 2014. However, do people think that if the poorest regions pass the 75% threshold in future, European territorial cohesion will be complete? Can the gap between 75% for the poorest and 150% or more for the richest – twice as much – be taken to represent the fulfilment of Europe's objectives in territorial cohesion terms? We should therefore take a long-term view of European cohesion policy. The threshold of 90% seems to me to be an objective that we can actually set today, while at the same time clearly prioritising those

who are still under 75%. Finally, with regard to the priorities of this policy: many people have spoken of social cohesion, particularly through the European Social Fund (ESF), of the fight against global warming and of territorial cooperation beyond borders, which is also a priority of the Commission; I shall not dwell on this matter. I would like to focus on the promotion of Europe's diversity. It is expressed primarily at the level of the regions and their cultural heritage, and it is an asset that will be taken into account and emphasised within the context of regional development policy.

Kay Swinburne (ECR). – Mr President, Parliament's Special Committee on the Financial, Economic and Social Crisis has concluded that one of the key instruments to aid economic recovery should be that of cohesion funding across all regions of the EU.

My nation of Wales is currently in receipt of cohesion funding, and given how badly the private sector in this region has been affected by the economic downturn, I and many others recognise the value of these funds to potentially transform the economy.

Funds, of course, need to be put to good use in sustainable projects, hopefully with many SMEs benefiting both directly and indirectly in order to ensure the return on investment for a future investment programme in these regions to use.

The cohesion funding should be a mechanism for stimulating economic growth across the EU, but needs to have a specific goal as supporting SMEs and entrepreneurs who are the backbone of our economy. Investment, not spending, should be the goal, pre- and post-2013.

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, the debate on so-called cohesion policy in the European Union has not highlighted basic characteristics such as: firstly, the fact that no EU cohesion policy can eliminate the inequalities in growth caused by the capitalist method of production, which operates solely on the criterion of profit for capital. Secondly, the fact that the money made available by the European Union to the regions is not intended to satisfy grassroots needs; it is intended for projects needed by capital. Thirdly, the fact that the debate on cuts in resources serves the interests of the large capitalist groups and, fourthly, the fact that the plans of capital for future cohesion policy serve speedier capitalist restructurings and the anti-grassroots EU 2020 strategy, which is also being used in Greece to reform the state on the basis of the Kapodistrias and Kallikratis plans.

Thus, in my opinion, it would appear in this matter that socialisation of the means of production alone can resolve the problem and bring about real cohesion on our continent.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD). – (LT) We all know very well that the objective of European Union cohesion policy is to reduce development disparities among EU Member States and regions. However, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that in implementing this large-scale programme in regional policy, it must cover all of Europe's regions and I agree with the opinion that this policy should not be nationalised. We must ensure stable and sustainable economic growth and job creation. A strong and properly financed EU regional policy is the basis for ensuring social, economic and territorial cohesion.

As always (as before), greater attention should also be devoted to regions lagging behind. It is good that in the next programming period, there are plans to earmark financial resources for investments required to implement urban and also suburban projects, without reducing rural funding, because cities have a positive impact on the economy of surrounding rural areas.

In this case, the most important aspects of discussions should be the following: the scope of EU cohesion policy, the validity of objectives, the link with the 2020 strategy and opportunities for implementing EU cohesion policy and simplifying its procedures.

Angelika Werthmann (NI). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund are financing instruments of EU regional policy which aim to bridge the development divide between the regions and promote regional cohesion.

The future challenges faced by our cohesion policy, such as globalisation, demographic change, climate change and energy supply, interact with one another in a very complex way. On account of our limited resources, we should focus on our key priorities and make an increased effort to identify synergies between the different policies. I support the call for a simple, fair and transparent transition system for cohesion policy after 2013. The restructuring of the policy depends on whether all the parties involved – the regions, the Member States and the EU – are in a position to respond quickly to these new challenges.

Csaba Óry (PPE). – (HU) Now that the individual policies and directions for the 2020 strategy are already on their way to being implemented in practice, we must realise that we know next to nothing about their funding or financial background. It only follows that by underlining the importance and necessity of the cohesion policy, in a sense, we also want to ensure that during the upcoming budget debates, the common European policy at issue becomes consolidated, not fragmented.

While there is no doubt and it has been pointed out by many that the creation of workplaces and the increase in employment are very high on the list of priorities, we also know that European labour markets are experiencing structural tension. While, in some areas, workplaces often lack people with the right qualifications or skills, elsewhere, highly qualified people struggle to find a job due to a lack of appropriate workplaces. It is obvious that the European Social Fund has a pivotal role in counteracting this situation, with policies designed to eliminate these differences and bring them closer together.

We are not talking about large-scale projects. We are talking about small projects and more flexible adjustment. While we endorse and support the concept of a single policy and the exploitation of synergies in the context of cohesion policy, I would also like to emphasise that where the Social Fund is concerned, we need a higher degree of flexibility and transparency and fewer rules. In this sense, there should be separate rules that apply to the Social Fund, and I welcome the Commissioner's statement about introducing a result-oriented assessment, considering that the biggest problem with these policies – one that also undermines their authority – is often that we are unable to see the results of funds spent in specific areas.

Georgios Stavrakakis (S&D). – Mr President, I am sure that Commissioner Hahn does not need to be persuaded that cohesion policy is one of the most successful policies of the EU, the results of which have influenced the lives of millions of citizens, wherever they live in Europe. I am sure that Commissioner Andor does not need to be persuaded about the successful delivery of the social policy aspects of cohesion policy, thanks to the strong synergy of the ESF and ERDF. Nor do the other two Commissioners dealing with EU funds in rural development and fisheries need to be persuaded that they are more effective working together with other funds, as they used to be, than on their own, as in the current period.

I am among those who expect that in the next period, we should have proposals for even stronger synergies between a strong cohesion policy and all the other funds, based on the

fact that all of them together can deliver far better results than each one on its own. But for some reason I fail to understand, there are voices inside the Commission that are calling for an approach of sectoral instruments, ignoring (in my view) the realities on the ground.

To conclude, what we say in our resolution, which I strongly hope and believe will be adopted by a very large majority later today, is supported not only by this House but also by the majority of Member States, all 271 regions of Europe and thousands of local authorities.

In my opinion, if the Commission follows the path of sectorisation of EU resources, we will arrive in a unique and conflictual situation where the Commission will be on one side and everybody else – Parliament, the Council and the regions – on the other side.

In the coming weeks, the side which believes that future EU policies would be best covered within an integrated approach to planning, implementation and delivery will have to engage in a serious fight with the side which believes that sectorisation of EU resources is the way to go. Be sure that the latter will find this group against them simply because it is the wrong way to go for Europe.

Riikka Manner (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, Commissioners, cohesion policy is not simply a matter of solidarity: it is partly a means for us to create added value for Europe as a whole.

There is a good deal of expertise in our region as well as very strong potential based on natural resources, for example. We can only achieve these targets, which are also closely linked to Europe 2020, through an effective cohesion policy which covers the whole of Europe and has adequate funds in its budget for the period starting in 2014.

It will be important in the next financial period that we continue to try to level out the differences between countries with respect to GDP. In addition, it is absolutely vital that the present Objective 2 regions and the special challenges they face are taken into account. Furthermore, I would appeal to you, Commissioners, with reference to Article 174: sparsely populated regions, mountainous areas and islands must also be considered in the next period of cohesion policy, with respect to funding too, as has been the case hitherto, and with much success.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude for having the opportunity to take part in this very important debate.

Konrad Szymański (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, I think that when planning changes which are so strategic, we should take very careful note of past experience. This experience tells us clearly that where money was spent on hard infrastructure investments and in accordance, primarily, with the GDP criterion, the expenditure brought advantages to the entire European Union, both to Member States which are net contributors to European funds and to those which are net beneficiaries. Acceleration of the process of reducing disparities in the level of infrastructure strengthened the common market and facilitated investment, which, after all, continues to flow mainly from net contributors to net beneficiaries. This gave clear European added value, which is something we have talked so much about today.

Therefore, it is with concern that I look at a situation in which we are planning a reform of cohesion policy and adding new criteria – very vague social and ecological criteria – to the system for distribution of these funds. This money should continue to serve the poorest

regions as defined by measurable criteria, in particular, concerning the achievement of hard infrastructure objectives.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, we all know that the aim of the European Social Fund is to narrow the prosperity gap and promote economic and social cohesion. However, today, in the year for combating poverty, Europe is in recession, we have unemployment, we have businesses closing and, therefore, the attainment of this objective hangs in the balance.

Commissioners, in my opinion, therefore, you should immediately revise the priorities of the European Funds, including the European Social Fund. However, Commissioners, I should like to say to you that we see the absurdities and paradoxes in your economic policies. In other words, you – the Commission, the IMF and the European Central Bank – have imposed a miserable memorandum on Greece, which cuts public spending, cuts wages, cuts incomes; at the same time, however, in response to my questions to the Commission about why there is a delay in the take-up of Community funds by Greece, the reply was: the inadequate liquidity of public finances; in other words, the essence of its political memorandum.

Please could you explain to us, Commissioner, how Greece can increase take-up? Is there not an absurdity, a paradox in your economic policies?

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) At present, we are giving almost one third of our budget to the EU's cohesion policy in the 2007-2013 period.

Under a number of new proposals, some of this budget would be redirected after 2013 towards fulfilling the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. However, in the Committee of the Regions, representatives of the cities and the regions warn us against making a significant reduction in contributions to regional policy. In my opinion, we should pay very serious attention to their objective arguments. It is, for example, clear to us that we must continue to support these regions, which currently fail to achieve even 75% of the average gross domestic product of the European Union. However, the financial resources allotted to them should be mainly directed as a matter of priority towards constructing basic infrastructure, supporting human resources or employment, greater investment in science, research and innovation, and the target of green growth. We should also try to improve links between regional and local structures and to reduce the bureaucratic burden. Through a well considered, balanced regional policy of this kind, we might finally also help to make the new Europe 2020 strategy truly successful.

Diane Dodds (NI). – Mr President, at a time when Member States are reducing public spending, in the UK our government is seeking to overhaul the benefits system to make work pay more.

I do believe, then, in this context, that funds such as the ESF have a vital role to play in ensuring the employability of those who are hard to reach and low-skilled.

We in Northern Ireland receive significant funding from the ESF administered through the Department for Learning and Employment, and I note that in a recent House of Lords enquiry into the ESF, it was noted the ESF continues to make a significant contribution to supporting economic growth in Northern Ireland, aimed at creating a knowledge-based economy with a highly skilled and flexible workforce.

It is therefore essential that future ESF projects and the money directed towards them can be considered in the context of domestic schemes, many of which have similar aims. That level of joined up and targeted thinking can only bring greater rewards. Regional flexibility is of the utmost importance for the successful operation of the ESF.

Post-2013, I believe that the limited resources of the ESF should continue to be focused on assisting the hardest to reach and least skilled into work or back into work through access to training and further education.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, this resolution is fundamental because it takes on board the important requirement for renewal connected with the creation of an anti-crisis policy for 2020 by striking a balance between necessary innovation and due respect for the fundamental principles of cohesion policy. This is, and must remain, the pillar of European integration. It must continue to play an essential role as an instrument for reconciling the differences between Member States while, at the same time, strengthening regional identities.

Therefore, notwithstanding the architecture of cohesion policy and having reaffirmed the value and relevance of multi-level governance, partnership and the integrated approach as fundamental principles, this resolution affirms the advantages of combining GDP, which must remain the only criterion for determining eligibility, with new and more meaningful indicators for the sole purpose of analysis and assessment; the need to lay down new rules for the European Social Fund, which should nonetheless be maintained under the regulation on general provisions concerning cohesion policy; and the need to simplify procedures and use financial engineering instruments, as Commissioner Hahn also stated.

Indeed, I am referring to Commissioner Hahn's speech, in particular, to the point where he mentioned the importance of maintaining the Stability Pact within the context of cohesion policy. That is all well and good, but to achieve that aim, the wretched agreement that stipulates that investment expenditure must be calculated within the parameters of the Stability Pact needs to be scrapped or amended, because it would be like asking for more investment expenditure on the one hand, and then punishing it by reducing it, on the other.

The challenges facing the European Union are difficult ones: employment, growth, development and competitiveness. These are the objectives of the European strategy, which provides for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. As many people have said, these can only be addressed if the future European financial framework takes into account the importance of regional policy, in order to achieve true economic, social and territorial cohesion, and if it is able to guarantee adequate financing despite the constraints on resources by carrying forward a policy where objectives are set according to priorities and assessed according to results.

Victor Boștinăru (S&D). – (RO) Hitherto, the cohesion policy has been a successful instrument in narrowing the disparities between Member States and for displaying solidarity, very much a fundamental value of our EU. However, it is vital to reduce the imbalances not only for the sake of the European Union, but also of every individual citizen and region, which requires not only human resources, but also sufficient financial resources.

The current cohesion policy requires improvements, without any major amendments. Above all, we must reject and refuse to renationalise and underfund it. At this juncture, when rich or less rich Member States are being hit by the effects of the economic crisis,

cutting the budget allocated to the cohesion policy would be tantamount to jeopardising all the successes over recent years and the reduction in the disparities which we have been endeavouring to combat up until now.

This is why I agree with the view of President José Manuel Durão Barroso that the budget allocated to the cohesion policy in the future must be at least equal to the current one. Otherwise, these will remain just fine words and we will undermine the European project itself.

Ivars Godmanis (ALDE). – Mr President, the resolution is strategically very well written. We must support it. However, we have to find where the problems are at present. I would point out to the Commissioner that, as at 1 September, the absorption rate for the Social Fund was just 18%, which is half as much – twice as bad – as in the previous period.

17 Member States are at less than 18%. Some of them are stuck at 10% or 11% absorption when it comes to the Social Fund. There is no pattern here: the countries with the biggest deficit are not showing the worst absorption rates. But the fact is that some countries were stuck at 10% throughout 2010.

The Commission has to clarify the situation. If one looks at the other funds – the Regional Fund and the Cohesion Fund – the situation is no better. The overall absorption rate is 17.95%. Also, 60% of Member States have a lower absorption than this. For some of them, the figure is three times less.

The Council has cut the funding under the draft budget for 2011 to less than EUR 1 000 million because the Member States have no clear idea about fulfilling their obligations. We in the Committee on Budgets supported the Committee on Regional Development in its request to restore the funding to the draft budget. The question is whether it will be possible for this money to be absorbed. If it cannot, there is no sense talking about a bright future.

Roberts Zīle (ECR). – (LV) Thank you, Mr President. Commissioner, I believe that the draft prepared by Mrs Hübner, the former Commissioner for Regional Policy, is also balanced and, in fact, good. I understand that we all know that the crisis has created a challenge for many Member States that are net contributors, as a result of which there is pressure for the next financial perspective to be reduced in money terms. In such a case, this major heading that cohesion policy represents is also extremely important. However, it is important for all of us not to get confused, but be a little more conservative and not let go of two fundamentals of cohesion policy, namely, that it is an independent policy, the main objective of which is still, and will remain, the equalisation of development between less well-developed regions and the rest of the European Union, and second, that per capita gross domestic product by purchasing power parity is nevertheless the main criterion. If we disregard these fundamentals, any other debates (such as how better to align cohesion policy with the achievement of the European Union's 2020 targets) will fail to achieve anything, even with 'EU 2020' in the context of cohesion policy. Thank you.

Thomas Mann (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, we are not talking about peanuts here. For the period from 2007 to 2013, EUR 75 billion is available for the European Social Fund (ESF) and this amounts to almost 8% of the EU budget. As Brussels will only provide the money for the ESF when the Member States take responsibility for cofinancing, this means that there will be around EUR 150 billion on the table for creating more and better jobs. Fortunately, ESF money is not used to fund unnecessary studies, but instead goes directly

to the people who need it. This is what makes it so valuable and what allows people to experience it at first hand, including the long-term unemployed, migrants, young people who have the opportunity to obtain the school leaving qualifications that they missed out on first time around, tens of thousands of trainees and retrainees, employees who want further training and budding entrepreneurs. It has a wide range of target groups.

What will happen after 2013? The Member States must make more effective use of the funding and we also need to take the special features of individual regions into account. I would like to see a tailor-made, bottom-up approach and effective coordination with programmes such as Daphne and PROGRESS. I am in favour of more flexibility, simpler controls and more transparent allocation of funding. However, I am opposed to a separate legal framework for the ESF. I believe it should remain within the Structural Fund regulation, which will ensure that the eligibility of expenditure is regulated at the level of the Member States. This is why I have tabled Amendment 1, together with 45 of my fellow Members, and I would ask you to support it in the forthcoming vote.

Evgeni Kirilov (S&D). – Mr President, we all agree that the cohesion policy has had a very positive impact so far. This is visible and recognisable. However, there are different ideas for the post-2013 cohesion policy.

We should further develop and adapt it to the new challenges and realities by building on its achievements and not by totally transforming the policy. This is equally important both for its basic principles and for the future budget. We need actions and they must be supported by adequate resources from the EU and national budgets.

The Committee on Budgets has recently stressed that an effort will be made to avoid big losers as far as future allocations from the structural funds are concerned. I strongly hope that the new Member States will not fall into the category of big losers. Therefore, cutting money for cohesion cannot be an option in any way. It is not only a financial issue, but it will negatively affect the principles of solidarity.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE). – (GA) Thank you, Mr President. I would like to say a few words about cohesion policy.

The future of cohesion policy has been framed in the context of rising unemployment and contracting public finances across Europe.

It is likely that the BMW (Border, Midlands and Western) region in my country will once again fall within the 75% to 100% EU GDP range. Measures must be put in place post-2013 which recognise this altered economic position in Ireland and in the BMW region in particular. The focus of Objective 2 programmes must be building the capacity of the regions in order to effectively contribute to the development of a greener, smarter and sustainable economy in Ireland and the rest of Europe.

Regional flights in the BMW region are an economic and social necessity. Therefore, public service obligation funding must be retained, as these internal flights would not survive economically otherwise.

EU support for cross-border cooperation in Ireland must be retained. Cross-border cooperation can address fragmentation in border regions in terms of the labour market, trade patterns and infrastructure.

Sophie Auconie (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, today is an extremely important political day for the future of EU regional policy. This is for two

reasons. The first is that this morning, we MEPs are joining forces and addressing our demands to the European Commission and the European ministers. We want to capitalise on our successes with this crucial policy and amend it as required to make it more accessible and more visible. We want a strong, well-financed policy that really helps to bring about economic development for all of our regions. We want simplified rules, and we do not just want to hear them talked about; we want them to be implemented for project leaders and potential beneficiaries. We want outermost towns and regions to receive special attention. I worked on this resolution when it was with the working group and Parliament's Committee on Regional Development. I supported the needs of potential beneficiaries and succeeded in ensuring that they were taken into account and adapted to the needs expressed in our regions. I want a united and social Europe, founded on a conquering, ambitious Europe.

The second extremely important event of today is this afternoon's action, where 140 regions will come together and their 140 regional presidents, together with MEPs, representing 85% of the EU population, will embark on a symbolic march to the European Commission – we shall see each other later, Commissioner – to demonstrate the extent to which all of us, the regions and Parliament, are aware of the importance of this cohesion policy for business, citizens, the social sphere and the economy, and we shall be united this afternoon in demonstrating the extent to which this first strong political campaign is a campaign of the people, a clear signal to the European Commission, directly via the regions.

Ricardo Cortés Lastra (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, I would like cohesion policy from 2013 to continue to be the prime example of solidarity within the EU. I would like cohesion policy to be a genuine response to the crisis and its aftermath, and in order to achieve this, it is essential for it to be incorporated into the Europe 2020 strategy and, specifically, into the target of job creation.

Cohesion policy needs to be increasingly participative and civil society needs to play a greater role in designing and managing the projects. It is important that you, in the Commission, see cohesion policy as an investment rather than expenditure and as an opportunity to generate trust and sustainable development.

I do not want cohesion policy to overlook the specific needs of the social groups with the most difficulties, as that is not compatible with an integrated approach or with a more strategic concept that is investing in the sectors of the future.

In short, as we have said so many times, we need cohesion policy that is solid, well-financed and present in all the regions of the European Union.

Edit Bauer (PPE). – (HU) Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, a lot has been said today about regional and cohesion policy. However, I would like to talk about the role of the European Social Fund, which has a fundamental role and significance in cohesion policy as well, because if large groups are falling behind, then we also have a problem with the cohesion policy. The role of the European Social Fund will be enhanced further by the 2020 strategy, as employability is a key issue. At this point, I would like to draw your attention to two issues:

The first is to make sure there is a second chance. We must provide a second chance for those who have lost their jobs in the crisis which accelerated certain globalisation processes, such as the massive exodus of mass production from Europe, and for those who cannot use their skills on the labour market because there is no demand for them. This is what we

call 'skill mismatch'. A second chance must also be provided for those who are unemployable due to a lack of any qualifications, such as school drop-outs.

The second is that the 2020 strategy would increase the level of employment among women by 25%. However, this will be possible only if Member States can provide, with the assistance of the European Social Fund, the indispensable backing in the area of services, particularly childcare and elderly care. Since the support required is often smaller in extent, payment rules would probably need to be more flexible than for projects funded from the large structural funds. What is absolutely inevitable is to ensure that supervision and evaluation are more stringent in order to make funding more transparent and more efficient.

Kerstin Westphal (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Hahn, Mr Andor, ladies and gentlemen, I do not need to emphasise how important cohesion and regional policy is for the process of living together and growing together in Europe. However, I also believe that in future, regional policy and cohesion policy must focus more closely on our cities. Cities are an important driving force behind development in Europe. At the same time, they are currently suffering from environmental, economic and social problems.

This is why I have a particular question for Mr Hahn. What opportunities do you think there are for highlighting the urban dimension? To come to the point, Mr Hahn, you recently indicated during an event which took place in this House that you had a specific percentage of the regional funding in mind which would be reserved for highlighting the urban dimension. Is this still the case? If so, what percentage were you thinking of?

Jan Olbrycht (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Commissioners, it is surprising that before a further financial framework is agreed, we often have discussions whose purpose is to defend cohesion policy, a policy which has proved to be one of the most effective and most visible in the European Union.

In fact, discussion of cohesion policy is, to a great extent, discussion about the European Union – about what the Union is, how it is supposed to function and how it is supposed to be understood by the citizens. We are not only talking about money; we are also thinking of whether we are really putting in place measures which lead to economic growth.

We need to take note of the fact that cohesion policy is a very special instrument, because it combines, on the one hand, reduction of disparities with the support of measures which lead to greater competitiveness. These two objectives are not incompatible – they make cohesion policy favourable to development. It is worth talking about this, because the policy is not one of charity, but is, in fact, a policy of measures intended to assist development. This is why it is part of the EU 2020 strategy.

Furthermore, it is worth saying that it is the only policy which is extremely complicated in terms of putting it into effect, because it is based on a common administration which is shared with the Member States. This means, on the one hand, that the instruments involved are extremely difficult and the procedures are very complicated, but, on the other, it produces a clear effect of cooperation between the European Union, Member States and local authorities. In view of this, let us not defend cohesion policy only in the context of the new economic conditions. Let us give thought to how to improve and strengthen it.

Salvatore Caronna (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, Open Days have been taking place here in Brussels over the last few days. Many municipal and regional representatives have been talking about how to address the serious problems our cities are facing and about the old and new needs affecting workers, families, and small and large production companies alike.

The economic crisis that has hit our societies has made it harder and more difficult for all of us to find suitable solutions to a new and serious social issue. In this context, I believe everyone has come to understand that, time and again, cohesion policy has been the only real instrument the regions have had available to them for trying to provide solutions. We can therefore say that over the last few years, cohesion policy has provided a vital fillip to the European integration process for all of the regions. Now we are having to redefine this policy for the period after 2013, and we are therefore at a turning point. That is why it is vitally important to avoid certain risks.

The first fundamental risk would be to renationalise it: that would be a serious step backwards. Next, when preparing the financing budget, we must lay down appropriate requirements with regard to the weaker areas without penalising the more competitive and more advanced regions. Lastly, it is essential to simplify the procedures for those who have demonstrated efficiency and to make more legally binding the power to penalise those who have not. We expect the Commission to take action along these lines.

Regina Bastos (PPE). – (PT) Mr President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, after four consecutive years in which the unemployment rate fell, from 2004 to 2008, the current economic crisis has wiped out much of the progress made. Unemployment rates across the European Union have shot up. In Portugal, for example, we have unfortunately reached the record level of 11% unemployment.

Another negative phenomenon is unemployment among young people in the EU. Europe is thus going through a period of transformation and faces huge challenges. The crisis has wiped out years of economic and social progress and exposed the weaknesses in its Member States' economies and, accordingly, in the economy of the EU itself. The Europe 2020 strategy is showing us which ways to go. The EU must intensify all its efforts to promote employment and social inclusion as an integral part of its strategy to fight the economic and social crisis.

I therefore welcome the motion for a resolution on the future of the European Social Fund (ESF), which we are debating today, because this fund plays a crucial role in achieving the Europe 2020 targets. This fund is, in fact, the main financial instrument enabling the EU to fulfil the strategic aims of its employment policy, through improving the education and training levels of the people of Europe. The ESF must be strengthened as the principal driving force behind Europe 2020, and it needs to be used by the Member States to invest in reskilling, employment, training and vocational retraining.

Lastly, I would like to point out that the ESF reform, to be carried out in conjunction with the reform of the other structural funds, should not only facilitate and simplify its management and improve transparency, but also focus funds on results and achievements that can make a difference to the general public in their daily lives.

Sergio Gaetano Cofferati (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, there is no doubt the Structural Funds have been one of the most effective instruments for giving shape to European policies and, above all, for ensuring the solidity of the European economy. That is why I believe it is very important not only to reconfirm them, but also to give thought to their effectiveness by introducing some sort of flexibility between one fund and another. I refer primarily to the European Social Fund, which is crucial today in order to guarantee the quality of future jobs in this part of the world.

It is certainly important to stimulate recovery and growth, but it is necessary to focus on competitive models that incorporate both the quality of what is produced through knowledge and the quality of how it is produced. Quality jobs are very important for people's dignity, as well as for their profit-making capacity.

I believe the European Social Fund needs specific and simple rules. Simplicity is not the enemy of effectiveness and quality, and if there are strict controls, it is even less likely to lead to actions that break the rules. I believe that simplification and greater control should be tightly linked. That way, we can truly equip the Europe 2020 strategy with instruments that have proven to be effective, but which have also demonstrated the need for certain updates.

Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, firstly, I would like to thank the working group led by the chair of the Committee on Regional Development, which has made it possible for us to have this debate today.

We certainly all agree that cohesion policy is the essential element for achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, and also for achieving European integration and achieving the economic, social and territorial cohesion set out in the Treaty of Lisbon that people are clamouring for so much.

What we need to start doing now, in my view, is to see what mistakes we have made and improve what we have done so far. We all agree that the process needs to be much more flexible, there need to be fewer bureaucratic obstacles, and the controls need to be simpler. Also, the regions with specific difficulties, such as islands, mountainous areas, cross-border regions and outermost regions, must receive specific treatment. Gross domestic product must continue to be the main criterion, although there might be other indicators in other decision-making processes, and the regions and local bodies must play a fundamental role. It seems that we all agree on this.

So we are going to go down this road, but the Commission should clarify for us whether this is indeed the road we should go down or whether it should be another one. It needs to clarify whether we are going to have the same budgets, which is absolutely essential in order for no one to lose out and for all the regions to be able to make progress in terms of innovation, competitiveness, development, income and progress, especially in a time of crisis when clarity is needed more than ever.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D). – Mr President, joined-up policies are essential to achieving results. So is a mechanism to drive change in a dynamic way, which is best achieved, in my view, by engaging all stakeholders in a structured manner.

The fundamental role that services of general interest, including social services, play in economic, social and territorial cohesion, in job creation and improving quality of life, has so far been ignored in this debate.

At the same time as we are debating how to make EU funds more effective in delivering cohesion, Council and Commission policies on fiscal consolidation are undermining services of general interest which are essential to cohesion. Without them, all the funds that Europe can pour into the Member States will be pointless.

Another problem is the negative impact that EU market rules are having on regional and local authorities' right to maintain and initiate services of general interest, including social

services. Yes, let us have more effective funds which are result-orientated, but we must stop the nonsense, the madness of stripping our societies of essential public services.

Tamás Deutsch (PPE). – (HU) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I believe a strong and efficient cohesion policy is inconceivable. Without the political consensus – or political cohesion if you will – required for the development and implementation of the policy, President Hübner's questions and the related draft decision, I believe, support the political consensus between political groups, political families, and maybe even between the various European institutions.

From this point of view, I find and consider unacceptable the siren voices heard in today's debate about the GDP as the number one and exclusive indicator and measure of eligibility for regional development support. I would like to express my most definite and unambiguous support for the strong views of Mr Olbrycht and Mrs Mazzoni, namely, the strong views I mentioned in earlier debates in the European Parliament, also shared by Commissioner Hahn, that although GDP does not reflect all dimensions of the stage of development, it is still the most reliable indicator available. Obviously, at Member State level, policy makers may use alternative indicators to eliminate its deficiencies, if any, and to account for environmental and social aspects of development. However, in order to assert European solidarity and ensure that Member States can catch up successfully, it is essential that GDP remains the fundamental and exclusive indicator for the distribution of funds at EU level.

Sylvana Rapti (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, the European Social Fund is a tool, a basic tool with which to build a better Europe, so that we can forge the solidarity of peoples and states. However, like every other tool, it is very important that we think about how we should use it.

Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, if we imagine the European Social Fund is a hammer, we can use it to hammer in the nails which will keep the European construct stable. If, however, we are careless and this hammer drops on our foot, then we shall be able to walk no further. I have used this metaphor to illustrate that, even if we create the best construct, the best infrastructure, if we forget that we are building it for the citizens of Europe, then we shall have failed. The European construct must be stable if people are to live and prosper in it, working in decent jobs with real future prospects.

Commissioners, please never forget that the basic investment of the European Social Fund is man.

Jan Kozłowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Commissioners, cohesion policy should be maintained and strengthened in the new financial framework.

In accordance with the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, which are fundamental principles of the Union, cohesion policy should support those regions which have the greatest distance to make up in terms of infrastructure, the economy, technology, employment or social integration and which, on the strength of their own resources, are unable to bridge this gap. This support should be for the pursuit of integrated strategies of regional development which also contain objectives established at national and Union level. Cohesion policy should go beyond the framework of spatial development policy and should integrate sectoral policies such as transport, energy, education, research, development and employment.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) Commissioners Andor and Hahn, the cohesion policy is the European Union's most successful and most perceivable public policy. It is also an important tool which will be much needed by the Union in the future as well. The convergence of new Baltic and Central European Member States is by no means complete. In addition, these funds are also needed by certain regions in Spain, Portugal and Greece.

However, it would be a mistake to believe that the only purpose of the cohesion policy is to promote convergence, given that it is the most comprehensive integrated investment policy supporting the objectives of the 2020 strategy. It would be a grave mistake to split up this cohesion policy. It would be the equivalent of breaking up the European Union. As a member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, I think it is very important that we aim for a greater degree of harmony and synergy between regional and rural development policies in the future.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, cohesion policy has been necessary, and it has been successful.

In my opinion, now we need to dare to look ahead and have the courage to ask whether the money today is going to the right places and having the impact it is intended to. Money is allocated here and there, and no longer these days to the poorest regions and where it actually might be needed. I think it is time we asked ourselves whether cohesion policy should be nationalised, with joint resources at EU level only being channelled to where there is a genuine need.

Secondly, I would like to say that bureaucracy unquestionably needs to be reduced: at present, 30-40% of the money available is spent on that, and it is definitely much too much.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE). – (RO) The achievements of the European Union's cohesion policy and the added value it can bring to the EU 2020 strategy are indisputable. The role which this policy plays in boosting regions' competitiveness and facilitating their increasing adaptability must also be highlighted.

Although the cohesion policy's priorities should be aligned with the EU 2020 objectives, I think that there should be sufficient flexibility to be able to take into account specific regional features and to support weaker regions with greater needs, so that the latter can overcome socio-economic difficulties and natural handicaps, and so that disparities can be reduced.

A strong, well-funded European Union regional policy which provides benefits to every region in the EU is a prerequisite for meeting our future objectives.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in a debate that is always of great interest to Members who come from and live on islands, such as, in my case, the Canary Islands. I am doing so in line with my participation in the debate on regional policy, under Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which took place recently, and I am only going to make three points.

Firstly, I would like to point out that this debate on the economic, social and territorial aspects of cohesion policy needs to be consistent with the financial perspectives set for 2014-2020. Not despite the crisis, but precisely because of the crisis, the objective of cohesion is more important than ever.

Secondly, I would like to point out that cohesion policy is not a sectoral policy, but a cross-cutting one, which means that the regional dimension of cohesion policy cannot be considered to be a specific sectoral policy, but rather it must cover energy, transport, communications and innovation policy.

Thirdly, I would like to point out that this is especially important for island territories, which are all external borders of the European Union, and therefore, they are very vulnerable in terms of security to illegal trafficking and also to threats from globalisation.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Mr President, as we know, 27 EU Member States with a large number of regions, cities and communities and a population of 500 million have, of course, a huge variety of different needs and problems. In addition, every EU initiative on a Brussels level has regional and local effects.

Since the 1970s, structural aid has been available for disadvantaged regions in order to ensure that the growth of the economy and of prosperity is geographically balanced. However, looking at the current situation, we seem not to have come any closer to achieving these goals. For example, the billions paid in subsidies to the regions of Ireland and Greece have not protected them from feeling the full force of the financial and economic crisis. Those regions which lost their status as Objective 1 zones during the enlargement in 2004 are not much better off. Their situation has only improved in statistical terms, in other words, on paper, but it is a well-known fact that you cannot eat paper. Large regions may be showing strong growth, but they can, at the same time, contain small regions which are fighting for survival.

Therefore, we need to make cohesion policy more efficient and the individual projects more sustainable.

Rareş-Lucian Niculescu (PPE). – (RO) I believe that the European Commission should explain clearly and in detail how synergy is going to be achieved between the cohesion funds and common agricultural policy funds, given that harmonising the operation of these funds would generate more added value for the EU's actions and would also boost our efficiency at achieving our objectives.

Last but not least, I support those who have called today for the rules governing every kind of fund to be simplified, both at European and Member State level. I also support fellow Members who have stated that GDP must remain the main criterion for determining eligibility for assistance.

Derek Vaughan (S&D). – Mr President, Wales has benefited hugely from structural funding. It is therefore not surprising that I support the current basis of cohesion policy.

I believe that structural funding should be made available to all regions across the EU and that adequate support should be provided for regions that no longer have convergence status. I believe competitiveness should be maintained, and would therefore urge all colleagues who are interested to attend this afternoon's march, organised by the Committee of the Regions.

Finally, I believe the European Social Fund should remain part of cohesion policy and not be moved out to sectoral projects. I look forward to the publication of the fifth Cohesion Report, around 9 November. In particular, I look forward to talking about some of the details, including simplification of the process, particularly for applicants. I also look

forward to discussing the definition of an urban area. That is a very important issue for us to discuss.

We must also, of course, ensure that cohesion policy and structural funds have an adequate budget in the future.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE). – (PT) Mr President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, if we look at the aims of cohesion policy, it clearly has European added value. It demonstrates European solidarity by reducing regional asymmetries and contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion. To be able to do that, therefore, it must have the necessary budget appropriation. Cohesion policy must also be flexible enough to address regional specificities, particularly those of the less-developed regions, and gross domestic product should be kept as the main eligibility criterion.

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development needs to be coordinated with cohesion policy funds so as to raise efficiency and maximise results. I also endorse and call on the Commission to carry out an evaluation of the absorption of cohesion policy funds so that measures to improve the absorption rates of these funds can be adopted with the greatest urgency.

Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D). – (FI) Mr President, Europe 2020 was, in the wake of the deepest crisis in European economic history, supposed to represent a new beginning. The debate that has taken place subsequently, however, has been dominated by talk of budgetary discipline and little else. It seems that those who say that we need to make more cuts get the loudest applause. The Council is making cuts, the Member States are making cuts, and now it appears that here too in Parliament, the general feeling is that the EU budget should also be cut.

That is not the way to build the future. Soon the European Union will have no cohesion policy, no regional policy, no employment policy, and no economic policy: it will only have a financial policy. Commissioners Hahn and Andor, are you concerned about this general climate of cuts? I believe that the debate going on here right now is a little naive.

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, your statement, Mr Hahn, that cohesion and regional policy is in good condition and should be a policy which is close to the citizens, incorporating different, well-designed instruments, is – it seems to me – a good answer to the question which has been asked in this Chamber today.

Overcoming the crisis, which has been a difficult one for all of us, and achieving the objectives of the 2020 economic strategy, necessitate cohesion policy and clear objectives, both for Member States and for regions. We have designated this year as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. We are also going to continue with this objective until 2020. We will not achieve this without the European Social Fund being incorporated into cohesion policy. This is what local authorities expect, too, and this is also being said by the Committee of the Regions, which represents them. We should, therefore, take very strong account of their opinion in this Chamber.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, it is well known that territorial cohesion, along with the economic and social prosperity of the Member States and their regions, need communication networks that facilitate and allow genuine free movement of people, goods and services across borders. They need these networks to guarantee greater coherence between mobility systems, greater coherence between the objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion and the planning of trans-European networks, which are frequently

ignored or are carried out in parallel without ensuring that the necessary defaults are in place.

However, so far, European policy regarding trans-European networks has met with a pitiful and resounding lack of funding, both from the European Union and from the Member States, especially in the cross-border sections, which everyone considers to be no-man's-land.

It is true that in those Member States that have succeeded in coordinating the two policies, there has been a multiplying effect that has fast-forwarded historically backward regions, towns and their citizens, including them in the cohesion that we all want to see.

This is why, in order to achieve the major objective of reducing disparities and bringing regions and citizens closer to our area of prosperity and welfare through better channels of communication, we need to add a serious discussion to the post-2013 debate regarding the urgent need to guarantee sufficient funding for the trans-European networks once and for all.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, cohesion policy covers and unites various wide-ranging developmental objectives, as well as the expectations not only of the regions, but also of various social groups. The achievements of cohesion policy and experiences gained from it show that it can and should be the policy which meets the new challenges contained in the 'Europe 2020' strategy.

Accelerated economic growth does not always translate into a reduction in poverty. This is why the European Social Fund plays such an important role and why we need to coordinate the various political strategies. Job creation and an education and retraining system which is fit-for-purpose are becoming exceptionally important. Cohesion policy is the basis for implementing the sustainable development of urban agglomerations and rural areas, taking into account their specific character and possibilities. Proper coordination of the various political strategies will allow the Rural Development Fund and other funds to reduce any delays in development and to take into account the specific character of less developed areas, including rural areas.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE). – (PT) Cohesion policies are not just another instrument of European integration but can be seen as a real embodiment and dynamic proof of the European project itself, in the sense of a community of citizens sharing values of social justice and solidarity.

In this context, we can understand the insistence that cohesion policies should be targeted at all the regions and that the eligibility criteria should be expanded beyond the current focus on per capita gross domestic product in order to make them fairer. Nonetheless, we must never lose sight of the primary and ultimate purpose of the cohesion policies, which is to achieve an equal standard of living for all Europeans, and that always means paying special attention to the poorest regions, such as some of the outermost regions, which effectively need measures specific to them.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) I would like to ask the European Commission to ensure that the European Union's future economic, social and territorial cohesion policy allocates large sums to the transport sector, especially for intermodality, and also to energy efficiency in residential buildings. I think that these investments will, on the one hand, create jobs at local and regional level, while also promoting economic well-being and development for small and medium-sized enterprises in these sectors.

Last but not least, Commissioner Hahn, I hope that after 2013, we will have a separate financing line for the European Union's Danube region strategy. I should mention that the European Union's Baltic region strategy has EUR 20 million just for 2011. The European Union's Danube region strategy may become one of the European Union's most successful projects.

Iosif Matula (PPE). – (RO) The timing of today's debate on the cohesion policy after 2013 is just right if we also consider that the Open Days are taking place in Brussels.

The fact that numerous participants from most of Europe's regions have come here to present their initiatives, efforts and results, as well as their dissatisfaction in a variety of areas of regional development, strengthens my view that the EU's cohesion policy delivers concrete results.

One particular aspect being considered during the current programming period is how efficiently current funds are being used. We will have to focus on implementing measures aimed at increasing the level of absorption of the allocated funds, especially in those regions facing difficulties in this respect. This is why efforts must continue at European, national and regional level to simplify the implementation of the cohesion policy. A proper balance must definitely be maintained between simplifying procedures and ensuring efficiency and good financial management in order to produce a policy which is easy to implement with a raised profile.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – (GA) I do not have much time, Mr President. Therefore, I will focus on just a few points.

Mr President, firstly, there can be no renationalisation of the ESF just as there can be no renationalisation of CAP. We need more, not less, Europe.

Secondly, there is a dire need for simplification in the process of application. I have met groups who did not bother to apply, even though they are entitled to funding, because the application was so complicated. Some actually had to hire an expert to do the application for them. This is ridiculous and must stop.

Thirdly, I think there is a need to keep both Objective 1 and Objective 2. I represented my group in Mannheim and I saw the benefits of Objective 2. I think that is important.

Finally, I want to say that there is also a need – even though some of my colleagues in the EPP do not agree with me – to look at GDP as not being the exclusive criterion. It should certainly be the main criterion, but not the only one. I think that is a debate we need to have and I look forward to it.

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D). – (PT) The European Social Fund (ESF) is probably the instrument that does the most to promote cohesion. It therefore needs to be closely coordinated with the Regional Development Fund. It is essential to take a local approach to the problems that need solving: in other words, global vision for local action. Local and regional authorities are the ones that know best what the situation is like on the ground, how much investment in job creation they need, and what the most suitable measures are to promote employment in their regions. We have to take account of the positive experiences of the regions.

In the Azores, an outermost region where unemployment generally reaches record levels, the unemployment rate is now 6.5%, the lowest in Portugal. That is largely due to the forward-planning strategy used for employment, which sets out which factors to address

and how to achieve the desired targets, and also to the use of the ESF as an operational instrument of this strategy, acting on education and training and furthering employment.

Applying cohesion policy across the board is the only way to ensure the success of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Piotr Borys (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, cohesion policy or regional policy could be one of the key drivers of the European Union's development. This is a policy which is more citizen-friendly than most, which concentrates on practical aims and on solving practical, important problems. This is why we need to complete matters of territorial cohesion within the framework of cohesion policy. Road building, high-speed rail links and complete cohesion, which will increase mobility throughout Europe, are key issues.

As far as the European Social Fund is concerned, it appears that we will be unable to implement the ambitious proposals of the Europe 2020 strategy. Today, one third of Europeans do not have vocational qualifications. I think that this fund, to a large extent, should today invest precisely in vocational training and lifelong learning, and should bring about an increase in the qualifications held by our European society. Moreover, this fund can be targeted not only at issues of social inclusion, but also at greater vocational mobility of European citizens.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE). – (SK) Regional development policy is a key element in the economic, social and territorial development of the European Union, and its systematic modernisation in response to new trends therefore deserves special attention and must be a priority for the European Union even after 2013.

The wealth of experience from the past must lead to the elimination of repeated errors, to greater efficiency, and to the rapid and high quality implementation of the cohesion policy, as well as to a smoothly functioning partnership and greater transparency. I firmly believe that implementation of the cohesion policy must, in future, be more geared towards results and the quality of results, which requires better monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency of the programmes implementing regional policy and the cohesion policy, so that resources go into infrastructure, science and research, and the fight against unemployment – for companies and for citizens – so that the regions can develop and catch up with the best.

Silvia Costa (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, I should like to express my support for maintaining the European Social Fund's own budget and rules, albeit with a view to its greater integration with all the other Structural Funds.

However, the rules need to be revised in at least five areas: we need more simplification and more monitoring of results and not just of procedures; we need to really make the most of experience such as that gained in the Italian regions over the last two years, to offer integrated packages of guidance, training, retraining and support to help integrate workers who have been made redundant or who are unemployed into SMEs; we need to promote training partnerships between educational training institutions, universities and businesses in order to provide opportunities for continuous training that take into account the need for new skills; we need more transnational projects, which, until now, have only been experimental; and we need more national and transnational work-study initiatives for young people.

I believe that it is on the basis of these points, among others, that we need to reconsider the prospect of introducing new rules for the European Social Fund.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Mr President, we are talking about cohesion and regional policy. As some of you may already know, there is a leaked document on the future of the common agricultural policy towards 2020, which also addresses the territorial challenges of the future. So there are links between all of our policies. In each of them, we want an adequately funded policy framework.

I have a few points in relation to the resolution. We also need coherence in Member States. We have seen where Member State policies have undone the good work of cohesion and regional policy. This week, we met members of regional authorities who spoke about the huge level of frustration when they are trying to access funding. Their voice must be not just heard but listened to and responded to.

I support this resolution.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – (HU) The European Union's cohesion and regional policies are extremely important, not only in order to increase competitiveness, but also to put the concept of a single Europe into practice. I think we all agree that a truly united Europe will only be built in the medium and long term if the levels of economic development are balanced across Europe. It is indispensable for the efficient implementation of the EU 2020 strategy and for reaching its objectives that regions with different levels of development all benefit from the process. This is why it is vital to keep cohesion policy funds available to less developed regions at their current level. We must prevent Europe splitting in two due to the deceleration of the catching-up process of Member States that joined the EU starting from 2004.

Anna Záborská (PPE). – (SK) In all of these strategies and frameworks, we must bear in mind the fundamental fact that Europe is not a project to construct an open-air museum. It is not a communist utopia where everyone works and everyone gets what they want. The European Social Fund is not a tool for implementing such ideas. It is a tool for assisting development but, first and foremost, it provides assistance to those who cannot help themselves.

If people are struggling with employment, housing, food or health, we must help them – that is what solidarity means. It does not mean artificially created jobs which deform the labour market, and it does not mean the levelling out of social and regional differences, which smacks of egalitarianism. Unless we want to share the fate of Prince Potemkin, we should avoid using the word 'social' more often than the word 'responsible'. The global financial crisis is a warning for us against the unrealistic and the irresponsible.

Jiří Havel (S&D). – (CS) Mr President, I would like to express my thanks for today's presentation and for the subsequent fruitful discussion. It fills me with enormous optimism. The fact that there is agreement on the need for a cohesion policy is undoubtedly good news for everyone, and the fact that there is agreement within this Parliament is, of course, even better.

I would like to thank the Commission for preparing to facilitate the drawdown of funds. I had the opportunity to review its proposal, and it is certainly a step in the right direction.

Finally, I would like to note that cohesion has an absolute and a relative dimension. The absolute is what we all understand as support for the poorest regions, but the relative dimension, within individual states, is equally important. I am interceding in order to ensure that it is not forgotten.

Paul Rübige (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, firstly, I would like to thank Mr Hahn, the former Austrian Minister for Science and Research, for starting a new debate which will make a major contribution to promoting growth in Europe. If every small and medium-sized company in Europe were to create one additional job, we would have no more unemployment in Europe. Therefore, we should be thinking about how we can enable these small and medium-sized businesses to hire new employees and also to play a more active role on international export markets.

However, the research and transport infrastructures are also important concerns. The Commission has major tasks ahead of it when it comes to restructuring the East-West connection, for example, from Paris to Budapest, or the North-South connection. New jobs, which are urgently needed in Europe at the moment, can be created in these areas.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE). – (PT) Mr President, Commissioner, cohesion policy is the great pillar of European solidarity. It is through cohesion that we achieve the objective of reducing regional disparities and stimulate harmonious development throughout the European Union. We must establish a framework for the forthcoming 2014-2020 period that can enhance the effectiveness of regional policy. Good governance must be encouraged at all levels through the greater involvement and participation of regional and local bodies, with respect for the principle of subsidiarity, as laid down in the new Treaty of Lisbon.

The special circumstances of the outermost regions must not be forgotten. This group of regions faces major challenges and must continue to benefit in future from special provisions regarding the implementation of European policies. Gross domestic product must remain the principal eligibility criterion, but we must take other indicators into account to provide a more complete picture of the regional situation.

Johannes Hahn, Member of the Commission. – (DE) Mr President, this has been a very lively and committed debate. I would like to thank everyone involved. I would also like to remind everyone and to repeat and reinforce the fact that regional policy is an investment policy which covers all the regions. It should be regarded as an integrated policy, which is why it definitely focuses on cities. However, this is also because different policy areas are concentrated in the cities, including energy wastage, reducing energy consumption, energy use, transport and social problems. These are all factors which we need to look at in an overall context.

We very much support the calls for a simplification of the rules. However, I would like to ask for your understanding in this area, because we also have to take into consideration taxpayers' requirements. Several speakers have referred today to the need to make the situation simpler, but we must do this by putting in place standardised rules for the different funds, as far as this is feasible and possible.

I would like to thank you for the discussion and for the backing of Parliament. However, I would also like to call on you to make your voices heard at a national level, in order to enlist support for the causes you have spoken about today, so that regional policy remains at the heart of European policy in future.

László Andor, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, for me, too, this has been an extremely useful and helpful discussion about the future of cohesion policy and, within that, the future of the European Social Fund.

I agree with everyone who stressed that this is a crucial financial instrument to support the Europe 2020 strategy and its three objectives: it is smart, sustainable and it involves inclusive

growth. Within inclusive growth, we have to support both targets: to increase employment and reduce poverty. The two are interlinked, and we have to make the ESF capable of serving a wide range of objectives within a social agenda.

It is clear that the discussion identified the major threats to cohesion policy, such as sectoralisation or nationalisation, or weakening the overall capacity by reducing the size of the envelope. We have to avoid these trajectories and identify the issues requiring further action. We have to ensure that there is innovation in terms of what the ESF funds, and in terms of how the ESF is funding these objectives.

I am completely open to working with Members on particular issues such as simplification, improving evaluation, strengthening conditionality, exploring the opportunities of financial engineering and cooperating with other sources of finance, because the challenges are enormous.

We are aware of the absorption problems, especially in Greece in a few years, and we are working hard with the services and with the Member State authorities to eliminate the obstacle to more rapid disbursement. It is in the common interest of the Commission and the Member States to make progress on that. But it is very clear and, together with Commissioner Hahn, I think we all agree that we have to ensure that there is a robust cohesion policy in the future, and my goal is also to ensure that within that, there is a strong and visible European Social Fund.

President. – I have received two motions for resolutions⁽¹⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 115(5) and Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place shortly.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Dominique Baudis (PPE), in writing. – (FR) By voting today, Thursday, 7 October 2010 on a resolution, the European Parliament is demanding that the Commission give thought to significantly improving cohesion policy instruments. Thanks to the Treaty of Lisbon, cohesion is no longer just economic and social; it is also territorial. Regional policy is one of the spearheads of European integration. It is the second heading in the Union's budget, after the common agricultural policy. Europe needs to adopt an integrated strategy for the development of its regions. The development of cross-border transport links is one of the major challenges of this policy. One of the priorities in this area is the route across the Pyrenees between France and Spain, which specifically concerns the European constituency of the South West. At the moment, the road and rail links do not meet expectations. Some regions, although linked from a socio-economic point of view, do not today enjoy adequate means of communication. The various projects that the Commission is due to carry forward in this geographical area will be carried out in the medium and long terms. They therefore deserve to be included in the discussion on cohesion policy after 2013.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) In the current economic and social crisis, the European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the principal European Union financial instruments for combating mass unemployment as well as poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, this fund plays a significant role in the areas of the education of workers, lifelong vocational

⁽¹⁾ See Minutes

training, the improvement of work opportunities and the integration of workers into the labour market. I agree that in order to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, especially in the areas of employment and social affairs, we must strengthen the ESF and increase its effectiveness, while improving this fund's financing procedures. Currently, this fund's financing system is far too complicated and therefore, it is very important for the Commission to simplify the financing procedures for the structural funds and make them more flexible, because only this will enable Member States to use money allocated from the ESF as effectively and efficiently as possible for the creation of new and better jobs. In terms of financing from the structural funds, we must not forget transparency and the strengthening of control over money earmarked for aid. Furthermore, I call on the Commission to distribute ESF money in an even more effective and targeted manner in future and to take all possible measures to ensure that EU money goes directly to people experiencing poverty, who need that aid the most. Only a more effective and stronger fund can contribute to reducing unemployment and poverty in Europe in the future.

Zuzana Brzobohatá (S&D), in writing. – (CS) I consider the resolution submitted on the basis of the oral question to be important in many respects. It is certainly worth mentioning that the common position presented in the draft resolution emphasises the call based on experience from the current programming period for the structure of the cohesion policy for the period after 2013 to be simple, fair, and transparent. I consider GDP to be the main criterion for determining eligibility for assistance within the framework of regional policy. It is possible, however, to discuss the addition of other measurable indicators for determining eligibility for assistance within the framework of regional policy, insofar as their significance can be proven. At the same time, I consider it important to maintain the European Social Fund as part of the regulation on general provisions relating to financial resources within the framework of the cohesion policy. We need to emphasise that this fund should have its own rules. In the formation of regional policy and cohesion policy after 2013, I consider it absolutely necessary to coordinate these policies in the area of rural development with the other pillar of the common agricultural policy, so that the two policies do not work at cross purposes and lead to mutually contradictory goals.

Alain Cadec (PPE), in writing. – (FR) The Structural Funds contribute to hundreds of economic, social and cultural projects in every region of Europe, with action taken as close as possible to the citizens. Their role in the success of the EU 2020 strategy is crucial. Like the vast majority of my colleagues in the Committee on Regional Development, I feel it is imperative to guarantee for the future a strong and well-financed cohesion policy that is aimed at all European regions. Last year, it was rumoured that the European Commission might be planning a partial renationalisation of the Structural Funds. That is unacceptable. I shall fight to safeguard the European added value of cohesion policy at regional level. Some people would also like to concentrate the Structural Funds even further on the poorest regions. This is madness: cohesion policy is not meant to be a policy of handouts; the so-called rich regions also experience many social and economic structural problems. Cohesion requires solidarity between all regions. It would be worth examining the relevance of the criteria used to assess eligibility for the Structural Funds. While GDP must remain the main criterion, the Commission should also look at other indicators that might better account for regional difficulties.

Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), in writing. – (RO) We all know that the European Social Fund is the main financial instrument available to the European Union for supporting Member States' employment policies. We are currently facing a crisis scenario at EU level

and Member States have different capabilities for managing the situations triggered by the economic and financial crisis. I welcome the intention behind the 'European Platform to combat poverty' of ensuring economic, social and territorial cohesion which will benefit from suitable financial support. However, I think that support from the European Social Fund must be based on solidarity. The future European Social Fund must support regions' efforts to train human resources so that they are able to comply with their development guidelines at the lowest possible labour costs.

Zita Gurmai (S&D), in writing. – During its history, the ESF has always adapted to the current economic priorities of the EU. It is evident that the ESF has to adapt itself again, because circumstances have changed. It has to be adapted to the EU 2020 strategy, where raising employment is a key goal. It has to adapt to the crisis. The ESF is not a crisis management tool per se, but now it has to function during a period of crisis. We should not forget that, even when macro-economic crises are over, employment levels may remain low. Unemployment has risen in Europe. Some European countries are forced to introduce budget cuts, which threaten jobs, especially in the public sector. The majority of public workers are women. Therefore, public sector lay-offs threaten women in the first instance. Enhancing women's labour market participation is a key goal for EU 2020 and for all reasonable political decision makers – women's participation is particularly important in order to protect and reshape our social model. Therefore, we should help those who lose their jobs due to budget cuts. Some countries would favour the ESF being nationalised to some extent in the next budget. But I strongly believe that the European Social Fund has to remain an integral part of EU policies.

Edit Herczog (S&D), in writing. – (HU) When we talk about the future of the cohesion policy and particularly about the objectives, priorities and structure of the policy, we must mention the EU-wide integration of EU and regional energy markets and the strategic infrastructural network promoting the use of renewable energy sources, because urban and rural development projects financed from structural funds constitute a very important part of EU energy investments. These include district heating investments, certain energy efficiency projects and local and regional energy network development projects. We must improve the future use of existing EU funds in a way that supports energy efficiency measures, and encourage a wider use of structural funds and Cohesion Fund sources for this purpose. As regards energy policy, the funds used for research, development and demonstrations should be doubled by 2020 compared to the current level. This should include a significant increase in funds allocated to renewable energy, smart grids and energy efficiency. One instrument that could help achieve this objective is the European Union's post-2013 cohesion and regional policy.

Tunne Kelam (PPE), in writing. – It will be crucial to link and accommodate the EU future cohesion policy to the EU 2020 strategy, because only this link can provide for sustainable economic growth, competitiveness and the creation of new jobs. At the same time, we should not allow the cohesion policy to be fragmented. EU 2020 will be an important component of the future cohesion policy; however, it cannot become its substitute. A radical simplification of the rules of financing is badly needed in order to make EU funds better available at the local and NGO level. These levels offer the best potential for a meaningful and well-targeted use of EU means. At this point, the often excessive bureaucratic accountability takes more time and energy than goes to the real working out of the projects. Such an imbalance is an increasingly serious practical and moral obstacle for further progress. When preparing the framework for the next financial period, it will

be important to engage in time the representatives of the regions and the business sector. Their experience and practical sense should be seen as a valuable contribution in efficiently implementing the future regional policy and in obtaining additional resources.

Ádám Kósa (PPE), *in writing*. – (HU) The draft motion for a resolution of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs is correct in highlighting the importance of supporting SMEs and creating synergies between the structural funds, because while the European Social Fund is a success story, errors are still made and it continues to struggle with many problems, especially during the financial and economic crisis. Moreover, the opportunities provided by and the positive effects of the European Economic Recovery Plan will also decrease in the future. Under the plan, the provisions of the General Block Exemption Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 800/2008) had previously allowed Member States to provide, on a temporary basis, additional subsidies and compensation for the employment of people with disabilities, subject to a number of conditions.

As regards the simplification proposed for the ESF, it is not the issues related to the management of the fund that should be the main focus. Instead, the priority should be to make sure that synergy (cross-subsidies and eligibility) is actually achieved in the course of planning and implementation by Member States. Furthermore, the continued increase in the number of experts without useful qualifications should be curtailed, because unemployment in disadvantaged groups should be reduced. At the same time, experts' networks and professional cooperation should be strengthened. One framework for achieving this could be the development of cross-border cooperation based on intra-regional connections.

Last but not least, let me comment on what Commissioners Hahn and Andor said: issues of urbanisation and sustainability should be given more attention as well. The reduction of burdens on families and of the disproportionate distribution of tasks within society which makes it difficult to start a family, as well as improving accessibility, are essential in reaching and ensuring a more active and healthier old age.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The cohesion policy is vital to the European integration process. We need a uniform EU-level regional policy which will bring about sustainable growth, job creation and modernisation across the whole European Union. We will successfully achieve our objectives only through viable synergy between all the European policies and by means of suitable budgetary instruments. The regional aspect must be fully considered as part of the proposed EU budget review and in the future financial framework. The cohesion policy after 2013 will need to provide an easy, transparent transition, based on a suitable quantifiable assessment of past experience and a proper evaluation of the specific economic and social features of the regions involved, thereby also ensuring tangible progress for them. GDP must remain the main criterion for determining eligibility for assistance under the regional policy. However, other indicators must also be accepted after carrying out an extensive evaluation proving their viability. The principle of subsidiarity, multi-level governance, strategic planning and simplified implementation of the regional policy must be linked effectively in order to achieve an ideal balance between quality, performance and financial control.

Jiří Maštálka (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (CS) I should like to say a few words. Those who are well informed know that debates on the future shape of this policy are now starting to become more intense. Sometimes, the question is even raised as to whether this policy should exist at all. The cohesion policy has its supporters, but also its critics. I would like

to mention the fundamental idea behind the creation of the cohesion policy in 1974 – the principle of solidarity between the economically more advanced and the economically weaker areas. In the EU, significant differences remain, and until they are evened out, the problem-free implementation of the idea of free movement of services or capital is unthinkable. There are a number of expert studies showing that the cohesion policy functions in principle, and creates the desired added value, and I therefore see critical voices more as a warning against procedural failures and a call for improvement in the future.

We know that the situation has changed since 1974 and that the cohesion policy is now an important instrument for the development of European regions and towns. This is also a strong argument for it to continue and to encompass the entire territory of the EU. It is necessary to have a discussion on the level of support in different regions, which will result from negotiations between the Council and Parliament. I trust that the Commission will come forward with good proposals. I would like to express my firm belief that with the right set-up, the critics will fall silent and will defend the existence of the cohesion policy for all EU citizens.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), in writing. – (LV) I am grateful to Mrs Hübner for her responsible work. All the issues included in the resolution are of current concern to Latvia. Unfortunately, in the cohesion policy programme, Latvia is represented by a single region. By contrast, Poland, for example, consists of 16 regions. In this connection, blatant violations are taking place in the application of EU structural funds in Latvia. I have received many reports that far from promoting the application of EU funds, officials in the Latvian Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Regional Development are impeding this process by demanding illegal payments from ordinary people in Latvia. The application of funds is not helped either by the fact that Latvia counts as one region. This gives politically committed forces the opportunity to ‘put a brake on’ projects in those local authorities where their political parties are not represented. By the same token, they give the green light to those who are included in their tight circle of corruption. All of this gives no opportunity for a region such as Latgale to make full use of the funds earmarked for the implementation of cohesion policy. A general review of the application and effectiveness of EU structural funds in Latvia needs to be carried out urgently. I am prepared to play an active part in such a review.

Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid (PPE), in writing. – (FR) Despite assurances from the Commission and the Council, Cohesion Policy is at risk because the size of its budget is making some people envious. This policy, which promotes the balanced development of Europe’s regions, accounts for one third of Community expenditure between 2007 and 2013. It is important to remember some of its principles: Cohesion Policy should continue to be a Community policy, retain substantial financing, ensure decentralised management of funds and multi-level governance, and retain an overall and integrated approach in order to meet the complex challenges which all European regions have to face. Although GDP should remain the main criterion in determining the eligibility of regions for European grants, it has been a struggle to get an ongoing consultation on other criteria. With its humanist tradition, Europe should remain at the forefront of the debate on new ways to assess our fellow citizens’ wealth and well-being. Finally, territorial cooperation deserves particular attention in the next Cohesion Policy. This objective is the embodiment of Europe in the everyday lives of our fellow citizens and makes an ‘ever closer union among the peoples of Europe’ possible.

Richard Seeber (PPE), in writing. – (DE) European regional policy after 2013 must cover all the regions, while being sufficiently flexible to take into account regional and territorial differences. In order to exploit fully the potential for growth of the regions and to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union, it is essential for us to focus on the goal of competitiveness, as well as on cohesion. In particular, we must take into consideration small-scale problems in wealthy Member States. We must also pay particular attention to the needs of mountain areas, as we plan and implement structural measures. The specific geographic features of these areas give rise to particular problems which must be reflected in coordinated strategies and measures. Alongside the urban dimension, the development of rural areas under the umbrella of regional policy is particularly important. By coordinating sectoral and territorial measures, we can maximise synergies and avoid possible conflicts.

IN THE CHAIR: STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

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

7. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

7.1. Extension of the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 to nationals of third countries who are not already covered by these provisions solely on the ground of their nationality (A7-0261/2010, Jean Lambert) (vote)

7.2. Appointment of a Member of the Court of Auditors (Mr Lazaros Stavrou Lazarou, CY) (A7-0254/2010, Inés Ayala Sender) (vote)

7.3. Appointment of a Member of the Court of Auditors (Mr Gijs M. de Vries, NL) (A7-0255/2010, Inés Ayala Sender) (vote)

- Before the vote:

Dimitar Stoyanov (NI). – (BG) This morning, activists from some environmental organisation took it upon themselves to deface sixteen of the twenty seven national flags of the Member States of the European Union. Whatever the point, whatever the cause, I believe, and I am certain that you will support me, that defacing national symbols should not be tolerated. Furthermore, defacing the Bulgarian national flag is a criminal offence under the Bulgarian criminal code, and the guilty party has to be handed over to the appropriate authorities. I am sure you will agree, regardless of the cause, that defacing national symbols of Member States must not be allowed.

7.4. Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: Spain/Galicia Textiles (A7-0259/2010, Barbara Matera) (vote)

7.5. Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: Denmark/Danfoss Group (A7-0258/2010, Barbara Matera) (vote)

- *After the vote:*

Barbara Matera, *rapporteur*. – (IT) Mr President, today's vote presents no particular problems and it respects the consolidated procedure. The most recent statistical framework shows a steady increase in requests received from Member States in favour of a fund that operates with a different degree of flexibility.

The European Commission has already given a sign of its confidence in the Fund by allocating new resources under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) budget line. This is a sign of pragmatism, which was also reconfirmed by the Committee on Budgets this week. Therefore, Europe's commitment to its citizens has been reconfirmed by Parliament's determination to find room in the 2011 budget, despite its greatly reduced margins, to give substance to this fund.

7.6. Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: Denmark/Linak A/S (A7-0257/2010, Barbara Matera) (vote)

8. Welcome

President. – Mrs Kheira Leila Ettayeb, chair of the Committee on Education, Training, Higher Education, Scientific Research and Religious Affairs in the Algerian Council of Nation, and Mr Pier Antonio Panzeri, chair of the delegation for relations with the Maghreb, co-chaired the meeting relating to the 10th Intergovernmental Meeting of the European Parliament and Algerian Parliament.

I trust that the meetings you had in the European Parliament were fruitful and make a positive contribution towards bringing the two institutions closer together.

9. Voting time (continuation)

9.1. 2008 discharge: European Police College (A7-0253/2010, Véronique Mathieu) (vote)

- *Before the vote:*

Véronique Mathieu, *rapporteur*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, following on from the unanimous vote in the Committee on Budgetary Control, the decision to refuse to grant discharge that has been submitted to you today is vitally important for our institution.

Firstly, I am keen to remind you of the professionalism and the efforts made by the other regulatory agencies to comply with standards of good administration. These efforts should not be tainted by the bad example set by the European Police College (CEPOL). That is why Parliament must assume its responsibilities as a discharge authority and refuse to grant CEPOL discharge for the financial year 2008 in the circumstances of which we are aware.

Thus, Parliament cannot accept the serious managerial failings of the former director, and, what is more, it cannot condone the fact that the management board has not assumed its responsibilities by adopting the necessary measures.

Finally, given that the College has been experiencing major difficulties since 2006 and that progress will not be seen until 2014, it is no longer acceptable for the College to need at least nine years to reach an adequate level of good administration.

To conclude, I should like to thank the shadow rapporteurs for their work on this matter.

9.2. Third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders of Member States (A7-0256/2010, Tanja Fajon) (vote)

- *Before the vote:*

Tanja Fajon, rapporteur. – Mr President, we have a very important vote ahead of us and I would kindly ask colleagues to lend strong support to granting a visa-free regime to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. Those countries deserve it.

I would like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Sven Alkalaj, and the President of the Albanian Parliament, Jozefina Topalli. It is they who will deliver the positive news from our institution.

(Applause)

9.3. Failures in protection of human rights and justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo (B7-0524/2010) (vote)

9.4. World day against the death penalty (B7-0541/2010) (vote)

9.5. EU action on oil exploration and extraction in Europe (vote)

- *Before the vote on paragraph 7:*

Corien Wortmann-Kool (PPE). – Mr President, paragraph 7 calls for a review of the EU's capacity for immediate response to accidents and for a European action plan. In the second part of that paragraph, there is a specific reference to the Arctic zone. The oral amendment is in addition to that second part and reads, 'moreover notes that the Mediterranean, Baltic and North Sea area has to be taken into consideration'.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

- *Before the vote on paragraph 16:*

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE). – Mr President, I propose inserting a little qualification about drilling operations in order to avoid any misinterpretations in cases where third countries are also involved. Concerning drilling operations, I would like to insert 'by EU and third countries'. Please support this.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

- *After the vote:*

Bogusław Sonik (PPE). – *(PL)* In my capacity as rapporteur, I would like to thank you for voting. The aim was, in cooperation with the European Commission, to define the highest standards possible for oil drilling operations in European waters.

At the same time, I would like to express sympathy and solidarity with my Hungarian fellow Members and what they are currently experiencing with the toxic spillage. We should also create the highest standards possible for dangerous waste in Europe.

(The sitting was suspended for a few minutes)

IN THE CHAIR: JERZY BUZEK

President

10. Formal sitting - 20th anniversary of German reunification

President. – Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, let me, on your behalf, welcome to the European Parliament all our honoured guests. Thank you for coming. Many of us remember – some of us who are very young will know it from history – the reunification of Germany 20 years ago.

Four great world leaders were there: the President of the United States, George Bush senior, the leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher and the President of France, François Mitterrand, and, of course, the foreign ministers of the four countries, negotiating the reunification treaty.

One of the foreign ministers is today with us. I am very glad to welcome to the European Parliament Mr Roland Dumas. We are very glad to see you.

We also greet both German leaders at that time: the Chancellor of West Germany, Helmut Kohl and the Prime Minister of East Germany, Lothar de Maizière. Welcome to the European Parliament, 20 years later.

The European institutions played a very important role in German reunification. I should also like to say on behalf of all of us: welcome home, Enrique Barón Crespo, former President of the European Parliament. Enrique, it is your home! Thank you for coming.

And last, but certainly not least, the President of the European Commission in those times, President Jacques Delors. We are very glad to see you. We are very grateful and we remember very well your speeches from those times. You were a great supporter of German unity and it was very important for all of us. There would be no reunification of Europe without the reunification of Germany. Those days were momentous for our continent and we can be proud of it and we will forever remember those days.

(The House accorded the speaker a standing ovation)

A key decision back then was also to decide on the borders for a reunified Germany. This was an important decision for the whole of Europe, for the peace, security and equilibrium of our continent. This particularly applies to the decision regarding the eastern border of Germany, on the Lusatian Neisse and Oder.

Let me also welcome the leaders of our European institutions. We are very glad to see you. First of all we have with us the President of the European Council, Mr Herman Van Rompuy, the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, and the representative of the Council's rotating presidency, Mr Chastel. I wish you all a very warm welcome back to the European Parliament.

We have two honoured speakers in this meeting. The first is Mr Lothar de Maizière, musician, lawyer, but, above all, leading politician, the first and last freely-elected Prime

Minister of East Germany. He signed the 2+4 Treaty and, after reunification, he was engaged by Chancellor Kohl as Minister for Special Affairs.

Lothar de Maizière, *former Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Delors, ladies and gentlemen, as I look around, I can spot many well-known and familiar faces here and I am very pleased to see all of you again.

It is a great honour for me to be able to speak to you on this occasion today in the European Parliament. This makes it clear that the reunification of Germany was by no means just a national matter, but also a fundamental European issue. I could even say that by unifying Germany, we have put an end to the misguided nationalism of the European peoples. Therefore, I want to use the opportunity presented by this anniversary and my speech to call on all the people of Europe to strive to achieve all of the things that unite us. Today, 7 October, is an appropriate day for this occasion because it marks the founding of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) 61 years ago. For 40 years, the Day of the Republic was celebrated lavishly and even ostentatiously on 7 October.

However, I became Prime Minister in order to abolish the GDR and to lead the East Germans into unity. At no point did we have the opportunity to resolve the open German question except in the context of European unity. The European Union, based on the foundations of the Treaty of Rome, has shown that the countries of Europe have learnt the right lessons from the horrors of two world wars. In 1957, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer ensured that the treaties enshrined the full membership of the East Germans in the case of reunification. This turned the intention behind the preamble to the German constitution, which refers to acting on behalf of those who have been prevented from participating, into a practical policy. As a result, the German question always remained on the agenda, because it was also one of the keys to overcoming the division of Europe. The two things are inextricably linked: the war which was started and lost by Germany and the Iron Curtain which divided Europe.

One particularly tragic aspect of this was that those people who were particularly hard hit by the Iron Curtain were the same people who had suffered most under National Socialism. Neither the uprisings in East Berlin in 1953 and in Poland and Hungary in 1956, nor the Prague Spring of 1968, succeeded in seriously shaking the foundations of communist rule. However, from this moment on, many people across the Eastern bloc states knew that the system that we lived under could not be reformed, but only overcome. This insight represented a bleak hope which we continued to cherish in the face of difficult circumstances and the behaviour of those in power, but which most people, including me, believed would not be fulfilled in their lifetimes.

Freedom had no voice. It was a time of oppressive silence and paralysis. However, all of this changed in October 1978 with the election of a Polish cardinal as Pope. His faith and his words alone unsettled the intolerant regimes. Firstly, the Polish people and then the whole world realised that this man said what he believed and believed what he said. John Paul II was the first conspicuous sign of the winds of change which would blow across Europe from then on and which, in 1989, would become a storm of upheaval.

(Loud applause)

The strikes in Danzig in 1980 and the founding of the first free trade union in the Eastern bloc made it clear that a process had been started that could no longer be stopped. The decisive factor in all of this is that none of the peoples were fighting just for themselves.

Anyone who called communism into question was doing so on behalf of everyone. Perhaps that is an ironic result of internationalism. Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Lech Wałęsa not only changed their own world, but also ours. We Germans have a great deal to thank the Polish people for.

(Loud applause)

Today, we should also remember the names of other figures who were representative of many people. I will only mention Andrei Sakharov and Václav Havel, who had already pulled stones out of the wall in Berlin long before it actually fell in 1989.

(Applause)

I would also like once again to emphasise our respect and gratitude towards Hungary which was the first country to be brave enough to open its borders.

(Applause)

It was a time when people acted on behalf of one another, because of their longing for freedom. This upheaval was a genuine joint effort and its most important result should and must be a lasting European community. Therefore, we should see these experiences as a challenge to search in Europe from now on for the things which unite us.

(Applause)

I will not forget how John Paul II in his speech at the Brandenburg Gate in 1996 said, looking back, that people had been separated from one another by walls and lethal borders. In this situation, the Brandenburg Gate in November 1989 bore witness to the fact that people were shaking off and destroying the yoke of oppression. The closed Brandenburg Gate stood as a symbol of separation. When it was finally opened, it became a symbol of unity and a sign of the fact that the call in the German constitution for the completion of the unity of Germany had been achieved in freedom. Now, people could rightly say that the Brandenburg Gate had become the gate of freedom. I would like to add to what he said, if I may do so as a Protestant from Brandenburg and a descendant of the Huguenots, that with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Brandenburg Gate has become a symbol of European unity. We Germans would not be doing justice to our national unity if we did not see it as a contribution to the unity of Europe, following the historical events which I have outlined here.

(Applause)

The first and the only free elections to the East German Volkskammer on 18 March 1990 resulted in a parliament which represented a true cross-section of the population and expressed the vitality and persuasive power of democracy as a form of government. A total of 93.4% of the electorate turned out to vote in the elections. I believe that this is a record which will not be matched in the near future. No one was left untouched by these elections. History will see them as astonishing proof of the fact that we East Germans, after liberating ourselves in the autumn of 1989, succeeded in introducing democracy to our country in the spring of 1990. The people of the GDR acted confidently and responsibly and did justice to their newly acquired freedom. Democracy and freedom are not simply abstract concepts. They permeate and define all aspects of our lives.

On the 20th anniversary of these elections to the Volkskammer, I said in the Reichstag, and I would like to reinforce this once again here, how important it was that the

Volkskammer immediately made it clear to all our neighbours that the changes in the GDR and the reunification of Germany were not a cause for concern. The parliament immediately, and of its own free will, admitted responsibility for the whole of German history. It bowed its head before the victims and guaranteed our Polish neighbours secure borders. It also asked for forgiveness for the GDR's involvement in crushing the Prague Spring. It did all of this before choosing a new government, because the new era after the end of the Cold War was to be a time of reconciliation, peace and community. This admission of responsibility alone represented the beginning of the work of the only freely elected East German Parliament. Everything that followed was linked to this admission and was the consequence of it, so to speak. This admission remains valid even now that the GDR has come to an end and it represents an obligation to search in everything we do for those things which unite us in Europe.

The East German Parliament gave me the responsibility of putting in place the process which would bring about the unity of the two states. I would like to emphasise that all of us at that time were only able to achieve those things that had long since become clear as a result of the people's enthusiasm for unity. The elections on 18 March 1990 were also a plebiscite on the German question. However, we still had to devote ourselves to drawing up treaties and putting in place regulations covering an almost endless number of problems. All areas of society were subjected to fundamental change. The German states were reintroduced, the separation of powers was re-established, the state under the rule of law was restored and education, the police and the administrative bodies were all democratised. One decisive factor was the reintroduction of local self-government which went back to Stein and Hardenberg's reform of Prussia and which allowed the people to take part in free local elections on 6 May 1990. We also drew up the major national treaties on the economic, currency and social union, the treaty of unification and, finally, the 2+4 treaty with the Allied powers – I am very pleased to see Roland Dumas here – which we signed in Moscow on 12 December.

(Applause)

In those six months, we achieved a huge amount and we are justified in referring to this as the most hardworking parliament in our history.

I remain grateful to this day for the fact that all our partners were highly committed comrades-in-arms. There are so many names which I could refer to at this point, but I would just like to mention Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev and George Bush senior. The speech about a common European house was one of the main starting points for Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. It finally opened a door to unity for the Germans. For this reason, we should never forget that Russia is an important part of this European house and that our partnership with Russia is essential to our survival.

(Applause)

On the basis of the Atlantic Alliance, George Bush provided special protection for our right to self-determination. I would also like to mention the name of Jacques Delors, who achieved a great deal as President of the European Commission and who provided us with indispensable help in the process of bringing about German unity. He was a true friend to the people of Germany. Many thanks!

(Applause)

I remain certain that the reunification of Germany would not have received such broad acceptance and cooperation if it had not been supported in the old Federal Republic by Helmut Kohl, who is undisputedly a very great European.

(Applause)

Two important things came together here. In an unrivalled act of self-liberation by peaceful means, the East Germans overthrew an oppressive regime and brought down the wall. Through democratic elections, they succeeded in bringing about fundamental change. With heads held high, the East Germans said 'We are the people' and then, a few weeks later, 'We are one people'. Those who achieved so much in such a short time should be full of self-confidence and pride. They have every reason to believe that they can withstand what we are now referring to as a crisis and that they will emerge stronger from every crisis. We have experience of transformation.

(Applause)

On the other hand, we have also realised that we are part of this great community of European peoples and part of the Atlantic Alliance. Other states and peoples have also defended our freedom and have done everything in their power to help us to achieve unity. Therefore, it is important for us to remind ourselves and future generations that we Germans were ourselves responsible for the defeat and division of our country. We have our friends, neighbours and partners to thank for our unity and freedom.

(Applause)

However, reunification did not just create the Germany that we know today. It also, of course, brought about fundamental changes in the old Federal Republic and throughout Europe. This process of change is continuing undiminished. Our people and our country were able to stop running round in circles over the German question. Instead, they could seriously dedicate their efforts to achieving the other great objective which is embodied in the German constitution and that is, promoting peace throughout the world by acting as an equal member of a united Europe. Now we want to be, and we are in a position to be, the driving force behind European unity and a guarantor of peace in the world, because we have achieved our unity peacefully, in cooperation with our neighbours, and we largely owe it to those neighbours. However, above all, we see this task as a valuable service provided by our country. This will allow us to put something into practice externally which internally represents the decisive content of democracy. Democracy is much less a type of state and much more a genuine service offered by everyone to the community and for the common good. More than any other type of regime, democracy calls for everyone to take action and to become involved.

The same applies to the social market economy, which is more than just an economic system. It requires and encourages a sense of responsibility among all citizens. It puts the common good before self-interest and it uses property in the service of the community, without which it cannot be guaranteed. In one way or another, we must keep saying to ourselves that the important issue is to replace division with participation in our country and in Europe. However, participation does not mean that everyone is given something. Instead it means that everyone can contribute something and needs to participate.

I am increasingly concerned about the growing contempt for the rights which form the foundation for our freedom. The authenticity and the power of democracy come solely from the attitude of the citizens. This concept of citizenship is what allows us to live together

as a community and encourages us always to search for those things which unite us. We are part of a community of peoples who guarantee the rights of citizens, strive for peace and prosperity and want to live in peace. In my opinion, the continent on which we live will have a positive future if it can find the centre point of these values of justice, democracy, peace and freedom and if it can find the unity which we lost after the Second World War. We spoke about the Western alliance, the Eastern bloc and the East-West conflict; we had East and West Berlin; our world was divided into East and West, but it no longer had a centre. An honest search for the things which unite us is also a search for our centre.

Sometimes, it almost makes me feel irritated that all the things which we went without in East Germany and which we longed for over many years are now taken for granted and go almost unnoticed. I am thinking of freedom of travel, of speech, of trade, of the press and of religion. I am thinking of the right to free and fair elections with a secret ballot and the right to codetermination. People nowadays take all of this so much for granted that they hardly notice it any more. There is always a risk that no attention will be paid to these things and that they will not be valued. Sometimes I feel disturbed when I remember how often people tend to gamble away what they have achieved, because they take it for granted and no longer appreciate it. They also make too little effort to expand their achievements.

(Applause)

We are often faced with difficult tasks. Now that we have enlarged the European Union, we also need to give it more depth. However, these tasks are still much more appealing than a relapse into conflict. It is so much better to work together to overcome crises and resolve problems than to face them alone.

(Applause)

The greatest disaster for the peoples of Europe would be a return to a lack of unity. For this reason, and in particular on a day like today, let us search for all the things that unite us. The rights and the freedoms which I have referred to form the heart and the centre of our society and of the European Union and our community of values. These are the things which unite us. From this centre comes the decisive and perhaps the only important duty which is imposed on us as citizens of Europe. We should be prepared to defend these rights and freedoms. The defence of freedom lies at the heart of Europe.

(Applause)

We have learned that freedom is indivisible. It is not possible for one part of a people to be free while the other part lives under an oppressive system, as was the case for us in Germany. The fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Iron Curtain in Europe has not only freed the East Germans and almost all the people of Eastern and Central Europe. It has also made the freedom of the whole of Europe complete. For this reason, the peoples of Europe can only find the things that are their own in the truest sense of the word within the community. We must preserve freedom within our community in order to ensure ourselves a positive future.

The last century, with its climaxes and terrible low points, has taught us one thing. History is not a mysterious destiny that is visited on peoples. History is simply the things which people do. However, it is more difficult to influence people's actions by calling on them to change than it is by setting them a good example. Those things which apply to individuals also apply to members of parliament, governments and entire peoples. We cannot demand that our citizens take a freedom-loving, democratic approach to life. We have to set them

an example. Therefore, I am asking you for just one thing today and I am making an urgent call to the peoples of Europe: Let us search for, promote and defend the things which unite us in everything we do. I am grateful that I was permitted to take on responsibility and that as a citizen I am, of course, still responsible for Brandenburg, which is my home, for a united Germany, the fatherland that I love, and for Europe, whose unity will determine our fate and our future.

Thank you very much.

(Loud, sustained applause)

President. – As you have shown, Mr de Maizière, our reunification – the reunification of Germany – started even earlier because we changed our attitude, our approach to our common European history and our common European future. But the most exciting moment was, of course, on 3 October 1990.

You will have realised that I did not welcome to the European Parliament former President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, because Hans-Gert, you are one of us. You sit here every day and work with us, but we are very glad that we are sitting in your honourable place among us.

Now we have our second honoured speaker, Jacques Delors. First, he was appointed as an advisor to the Prime Minister of France, Jacques Chaban-Delmas. Later, for two and a half years, he was a Member of the European Parliament. Probably not all of us remember that. Later, he was also a Minister of Economy and Finance. He had two terms in office as President of the European Commission. He led the single market project and was a key player in the preparation and implementation of the Maastricht Treaty, which was very important for the whole European Union. He was the founder and the President of the think tank Notre Europe, and some other initiatives.

(Applause)

Jacques L.J. Delors, *former President of the European Commission.* – (FR) Mr President, Mr de Maizière, Mr Van Rompuy, Mr Barroso, Excellencies, Members of the European Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, barely a year elapsed between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany.

During the whole of 1989, the peoples of Europe expressed themselves: in Poland, the events that had begun with the Gdańsk strikes in the summer of 1980 led to the Belvedere Agreements between February and April 1989, followed by the first free elections on 4 June 1989; in Czechoslovakia, the people commemorated Jan Palach's sacrifice by fire; in Hungary, they marked the solemn funeral of Imre Nagy, at last rehabilitated; in Bulgaria, President Zhivkov was forced to stand down; and, of course, in East Germany, increasing numbers of people took part in peaceful demonstrations. The people's demands were gaining strength and, on 2 May 1989, the opening of the border between Hungary and Austria enabled some East Germans to cross over to the West.

We therefore witnessed a moment in time when history accelerated, and we must admit that it took us all by surprise. Some of us knew intuitively that there were growing imbalances in the communist countries, but no one could have known that the lid would blow off so fast. 1989 was a year of profound change in many parts of the world, with, as I recall, the fall of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and the Tiananmen uprising in China.

To come back to Europe, the events of 1989 could, at any moment, have triggered brutal repression or resulted in bloody conflict, leading to a period of prolonged instability and threats to peace. This did not happen. This is the second lesson, after the one learned from the popular uprising. We, who have lived through these events, must bear witness to them.

Indeed, new generations must be taught about the events of that period, since they did not experience them first-hand. Today, they live in prosperity and peace, while seeing the tensions and revolts that are shaking the world from afar. Therefore, the only images of violence and hatred they see are through the prism of the media. Yet they must store in their memories the all-important fact that it was thanks to the wisdom of a number of world leaders in the years 1989 and 1990 that Europeans were able to live through a transition that was admittedly emotional, but free of any significant bloodshed and dangerous contamination.

(Applause)

I will not name all those leaders – Mr de Maizière has already done so – whose calm under pressure and whose wisdom I have just lauded, for fear of forgetting someone, offending sensibilities, or being misunderstood. Some of them, I should add, have unfortunately suffered the ingratitude of their peoples and their successors. History, I am sure, will correct these errors and omissions and will shine the light of truth on these events.

However, let us return for a moment to the shock of the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989. Even before politicians and diplomats had time to catch their breath, the European Community had to respond, if only in terms of the provisions of the Treaty of Rome to which Mr de Maizière has referred. On 11 November, having convened an urgent meeting of the members of the European Commission, I was interviewed on German television and I asserted that the East Germans were free to choose, and that there was a place for them in the European Community. I added, and I quote: ‘We are a great community within which we shall together build our destiny to better harness history in the interest of all.’

At the time, it was not possible to say more. It was my duty to send a message of welcome and hope to our East German friends. At the same time, I tried to allay the fears and anxieties felt by many people. From that moment on, many meetings were held between leaders across the world, between the United States and the Soviet Union, between the latter and the Europeans, and between East and West Germany and the four allied powers of World War Two, the ‘Two-plus-Four’ Process. Meanwhile, progress was being made in the negotiations between the Federal Republic of Germany and representatives of the German Democratic Republic, and primarily between Mr de Maizière and Chancellor Kohl.

This raised many questions, it should be said, within the European Community in light of this radically shifting political landscape. However, the European Community could ultimately only approve and support reunification of the two Germanies, which it did at the European Council meeting held on 24 April 1990 in Dublin. In acting in this way, and in taking note of the assurances given with regard to the lasting and fair nature of the arrangements made in the ‘Two-plus-Four’ Process, the Community remained true to the values for which it stands: peace, mutual understanding between peoples, and solidarity, especially with all Germans in the East and in the West. Moreover, I cannot help but think that throughout the dark years, the Community’s very existence, and not just its material prosperity, always stood as a reference point and a beacon for the peoples living under the communist yoke.

Indeed, let me just remind you: the Community was moving in concert with these events. As early as July 1989 – as Mr Dumas will remember, as he was one of the people involved – even before the fall of the Wall, the Commission had persuaded the G7 to adopt a plan to help the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The spirit of openness and a favourable predisposition towards enlargement had already been formally confirmed. Nevertheless, after the fall of the Wall, the German question, it has to be said, was a major concern. What path would reunited Germany choose?

On 19 November 1989, on the initiative of Mr Mitterrand, an extraordinary European Council met to pave the way for regular consultations between the two Germanies and their partners. A long presentation by Chancellor Kohl summed up the situation which, of course, was still necessarily in flux. History had begun on its accelerated course.

The European Parliament was also very active and attentive during this time. Its debates reflected the questions being asked about the future of Germany and the risk, feared by many MEPs, of a slowdown in the European integration process, after the boost given by the Single European Act of 1987. On 28 November 1989, Parliament adopted a very important resolution affirming, and I quote: ‘All European peoples, including the Polish people, have, in accordance with the Helsinki Final Act, the right to live within secure borders as currently defined.’ In this way, the European Parliament referred to one of the most difficult debates, which was resolved by maintaining the Oder-Neisse border.

On 17 January 1990, I stood before the European Parliament as President of the European Commission and stated that, and I quote: ‘East Germany is a separate case. It belongs within the Community, if that is what it wants.’ This prospect led your Parliament to set up a temporary commission to study the impact of the German reunification process on the European Community. That commission, which was composed, I must stress, of highly experienced individuals including several ministers for foreign affairs, effectively dispelled doubts about the integration of the East German *Länder*, and paved the way for it. This is a useful reminder for sceptics of all persuasions that, thanks to the European Parliament, the concept of a pluralist and living democracy is not a vain hope but a reality. The commission demonstrated it on that occasion.

(Applause)

All things considered, we should not underestimate the achievements and influence of European integration, regardless of the obstacles standing in its way. Of course, I will not attempt to single out the most important facts and ideas that were able to influence this great liberation movement.

Undoubtedly what comes first is the people’s ability to stand up to oppression, to express their thirst for freedom, and to quietly display their courage. However, it would be remiss of me not to recall the appeals made by John Paul II, and particularly his call made to the Polish people at a critical juncture: ‘Have no fear!’ Nor can I forget West Germany’s firm but open and generous policy towards the GDR during the years leading up to the fall of the Wall.

Freedom triumphed, but with freedom come obligations. The treaty on the reunification of Germany presented two challenges. The first was for the people of West and East Germany to understand each other. This was met with great presence of mind, understanding and generosity. The second was economic and social, and equally difficult to meet. It required a tremendous effort in the form of massive annual transfers, from the

West to the East, of resources amounting to 4-5% of West Germany's national product, or, ladies and gentlemen, EUR 1 400 billion over 20 years. This is without mentioning the other contributions in the form of technical assistance, which was required to restructure the East German economy.

A single figure illustrates the scale of this achievement: over a twenty-year period, per capita income in the GDR went from 40% to 73% of the West Germans' income. The effort will continue over the years to come thanks to the ongoing payment of the solidarity tax – if I am not mistaken, it will continue until 2019. The Germans themselves agree to this. Work still needs to be done to change mindsets as much as economic and social structures.

For its part, the European Community contributed by extending economic and social cohesion policy, which MEPs know well, to the Eastern *Länder*. While the sums pledged were not on a par with the efforts made by the Germans, the European contributions clearly indicated East Germany's status as a fully fledged participant in the European adventure, the increased human and technical exchanges and the regular dialogue between the European Commission and the leaders of the new *Länder*. It had been my wish for the Community to do more, but the German leadership, worried about how its partners would react, asked me not to take the Structural Fund effort any further.

Ladies and gentlemen, 20 years later, at a time when, the financial crisis aside, many people are questioning European integration, the 27 Member States are faced with an historic responsibility: to deepen European integration, or to live day to day as a result of compromises that may well be necessary but that do not bode well for the future.

(Applause)

Today, as we joyfully celebrate German reunification, how can we fail to ask Germany what future it sees for Europe? Reunified Germany is the economic powerhouse of the 27 countries that make up the Union. To cite just one figure, Germany produces 25% of the total GDP of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). I refer to the EMU because, whether we like it or not, it is the strongest link between the European nations that share the same currency, with the rights, but also the obligations, that this entails. Many people in Europe perhaps tend to forget this.

(Applause)

In geopolitical terms, Germany is today poised between the European Union and the rest of the large European continent. This is a strong and, in many ways, attractive position, which raises many questions both within and outside of Germany. The Germans themselves agree with this view, as the White Paper on security in Germany clearly shows. I quote: 'An important role in the future shaping of Europe, and beyond, falls to united Germany because of its size, population figures, economic power and geographical location at the heart of the continent.'

We are therefore no longer in the pre-1989 period, when Germany showed restraint and tact, for reasons that everybody could understand and even be thankful for. This very restraint caused successive German governments to take the lead in European integration, especially when it came to abandoning the mighty Deutschmark – and I say the mighty Deutschmark because it is 10 Marks and is the symbol of Germany's rebirth – in exchange for the euro, for the single currency.

These remarks, far from being nostalgic, are an appeal by one of Europe's activists, and are directed not only at Germany, whose reunification we are celebrating, but at all the Member States. Are the values handed down to us by the founding fathers of Europe still meaningful? Do they still prevail? The legacy we have been given has more to do with why we want to live alongside one another than with the treaties, which are merely necessary institutional agreements.

However, I would not wish to end on this slightly pessimistic note, with this question mark hanging over matters. No, emphatically not. What I retain in my memory and in my heart is that night of 3 October, when the President of the European Parliament, Mr Barón Crespo, and I had the pleasure and honour of being invited to that memorable evening gathering in the former Reichstag. The leaders of West and East Germany enthusiastically came together in an atmosphere marked by solemnity and joy. All Europeans would have shared that deep emotion.

After the ceremony I wanted to experience what a nation was feeling by going out on to the streets of Berlin. There, too, I saw only solemnity and joy; there was no fanfare or ostentatious demonstrations. It was a quiet night that everyone was savouring by reflecting on the separations of the past, on the anguish of families torn apart by an arbitrary act of history; a quiet night during which I thought of our Europe, freed from hatred and conflict, a Europe that I wanted to be at the same time united, strong and generous.

You will surely agree that so much remains to be done to consolidate our achievements and progress into the future.

(The House accorded the speaker a standing ovation)

President. – We remember, Mr Delors, your speech at the College of Europe in Bruges at the beginning of 1990. It was about German reunification, and German reunification, in your words, was the best way for better coordination in Europe and a better future for Europe. It was a great and visionary speech.

Thank you very much for your speech today as well.

Let me thank our honourable guests from Spain, from France, from Germany, and the presidents of our institutions, the Commission and the Council, for being together with us. We will now hear the European anthem.

IN THE CHAIR: STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

11. Voting time (continuation)

President. – We shall continue with the vote.

(For the results and other details on the vote: see Minutes).

11.1. Conference on Biological Diversity - Nagoya 2010 (vote)

- Before the vote:

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, I will be very brief. I should like to express through this short point of order both my admiration for the great musician Beethoven

and my disapproval of the fact that we are regularly subjected to a European anthem which has disappeared into ...

(Protests)

(The President cut off the speaker)

Joseph Daul (PPE). – *(FR)* Mr President, I am outraged by those statements.

(Applause)

Out of respect for freedom, peace and for what our citizens suffered, I simply request, if these gentlemen wish to be respectable and respected by myself, that they no longer accept the salary of an MEP, paid for by Europe.

(Applause)

President. – Mr Gollnisch, I am a very nice and patient man. You do not have the floor. This is not a point of order. If you continue shouting, you will be taken out of this room politely.

- Before the vote:

Sandrine Bélier (Verts/ALE). – *(FR)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to ask you to consider that the exact and original wording of paragraph 35 of the resolution, which is put to the vote and which stresses that corporate social responsibility should include biodiversity, is the French version, and that that should be the version used. Moreover, the word 'social', which has disappeared from the English version, should be reinserted and the version corrected.

- After the vote on paragraph 16:

Sandrine Bélier (Verts/ALE). – *(FR)* Mr President, you invited us to vote for the original text of paragraph 16. However, there was a separate vote beforehand, and paragraph 16 was amended. There were two separate votes. Therefore, we voted for the original text but not for the amendment.

- Before the vote on paragraph 4:

Esther de Lange (PPE). – Mr President, before we take the final vote – and although I am very happy with the fact that we adopted Amendment 1 – I think that Ms Bélier of the Greens is right. In fact, you called out to vote on the original paragraph.

On the screens, we then saw that we voted on Amendment 1. To be fair to the Greens, I think we should take the vote on Amendment 1 again.

If Amendment 1 is adopted, the original paragraph falls.

President. – It may have been because I speak Greek, which is not a particularly well-known language, and I speak it fast in order to help everyone here. I believe – I may be wrong – that I first put Amendment 1 to the vote by roll-call vote and that I then put to the vote ...

(Objections)

OK, I will trust the House. My guess is, if my recollection is correct, that Amendment 1 will be rejected and then the original text will be adopted, but I will do it.

I will go back to Amendment 1 by roll-call vote. The vote is open.

(Amendment 1 was adopted by roll-call vote)

**11.2. Basel II and revision of the Capital Requirements Directive (CRD 4)
(A7-0251/2010, Othmar Karas) (vote)**

**11.3. Health care systems in Sub-Saharan Africa and Global Health (A7-0245/2010,
Véronique De Keyser) (vote)**

11.4. EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013 (vote)

11.5. Future of the European Social Fund (B7-0535/2010) (vote)

Csaba Óry (PPE). – *(HU)* We would like to make the addition ‘but with its own rules’ to proposed Amendment 1, which was submitted by 40 members. I have agreed on the oral amendment with the others, including the Members submitting the proposed amendment.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

IN THE CHAIR: LIBOR ROUČEK

Vice-President

12. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes

13. Explanations of vote

Oral explanations of vote

- Report: Veronique Mathieu (A7-0253/2010)

Lucas Hartong (NI). – *(NL)* Mr President, my fellow member, Mrs Mathieu, suggested in her report that, for the time being, we refuse to grant discharge to the European Police College in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008. Naturally, my group, the delegation of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), thought that that approach was quite right. To be precise, the dossier on the Police College reads from beginning to end like a Hercule Poirot whodunit. Poor management, an accounting system vulnerable to fraud, many financial irregularities and, in particular, ‘creative’ budgetary spending, unauthorised use of funds, and the list goes on. In fact, the situation was so bad that, in the end, OLAF, the European Anti-Fraud Office, was forced to step in.

It is a positive thing that an investigation is under way and that action is being taken against fraud. However, would it not have been better if we had prevented the fraud right from the start? How could this have been allowed to happen? Why were the controls in place so obviously inadequate? Again, we have a situation where our citizens can only look on and shake their heads. On behalf of Dutch citizens, we explicitly request that you put an end to this entire European police puppet show as soon as possible and simply leave real police work to the Hercule Poirots of individual Member States.

- Motion for a resolution: Failures in protection of human rights and justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo (RC-B7-0524/2010)

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) Mr President, I voted in favour of this initiative in order to condemn the mass human rights violations and the use of rape as a weapon of war against women, boys, girls and babies; in order to ask for those implicated to be held responsible; in order to demand more commitment from the United Nations following the failure of the actions of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; in order to demand a political solution to the armed conflict, which needs to happen by resuming the dialogue on the peace process; and in order to demand greater commitment from the Great Lakes region to promoting peace and stability in the region.

- Motion for a resolution: World day against the death penalty (RC-B7-0541/2010)

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, I was pleased to vote in favour of this proposal. At the last plenary session, we voted to ask the Iranian Government to suspend the execution by stoning of Sakineh Mohammadi-Ashtiani. That was done pending a review, but that review is most bizarre. She has now allegedly been found guilty of murder, despite the fact that another man had already been found guilty of that murder. He has now been released on the basis that Ashtiani's children forgave her father's killer.

This murder allegation is based on court documents which do not stand up. We need to use our influence to bring more pressure to bear on the Iranian Government to suspend the execution permanently, and maybe to grant her the asylum in Brazil offered by the Brazilian President.

- Motion for a resolution: Failures in protection of human rights and justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo (RC-B7-0524/2010)

Lena Ek (ALDE). – (SV) Mr President, according to UN reports, at least 8 300 rapes were committed as a weapon of war in eastern Congo in 2009. During the first quarter of 2010, 1 244 women were raped. There are an average of 14 rapes per day that we know about, because over and above these figures, the numbers of unreported cases are huge. The fact that this has continued without strong condemnation from the international community is appalling, and Europe, too, has a particular responsibility when it comes to Congo.

Sexual and gender-based violence must always be seen as a war crime and a crime against humanity. It is scandalous that the international community has turned a blind eye for so long to the attacks that the women and children of Congo are being subjected to. I am therefore very pleased to see the commitment shown by the UN Special Representative, Margot Wallström. Her work will help to direct the world's gaze towards Congo and its leadership. It is now high time that we all opened our eyes. This is why I wholeheartedly support this resolution that has today been voted through by this House. Let us never turn our backs on Africa's women and children again.

- Motion for a resolution: EU action on oil exploration and extraction in Europe (RC-B7-0540/2010)

Salvatore Iacolino (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, I voted in favour of this undoubtedly important resolution because it raises the level of protection and guarantees with regard to future drilling in all seas, but especially in fragile seas and in those that have specific features that must be duly taken into account.

Equally important is the attempt to draw attention to the responsibility and financial liability of operators who perform this profitable activity, which requires necessary precautions in order to prevent what has happened elsewhere, such as in the Gulf of Mexico, from happening in our own seas.

Clearly, environmental protection does not mean denying the right to take entrepreneurial initiatives, but it does require a precautionary approach – as Commissioner Oettinger referred to it – in cooperation with other third countries to ensure the safety of our seas.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that oil exploration in Europe is an extremely important issue. For this reason, I submitted a written question on this subject in July. The serious incident that occurred in the Gulf of Mexico in April is a warning bell that we cannot afford to underestimate. In fact, there is a risk of similar episodes occurring in Europe, too.

On 21 May, a platform in the North Sea, from which 200 million tonnes of petroleum are extracted each year, was evacuated because of a serious accident risk. We must never forget, ladies and gentlemen, that if a disaster of this kind were to occur in a closed sea such as the Mediterranean, its inestimable wealth of biodiversity would be compromised to an unimaginable extent, as Mr Iacolino just highlighted.

According to European Commission data, the oil platforms in our seas produced around 200 million tonnes of petroleum in 2008. These figures are still too high for an economy that must necessarily free itself of fossil fuels. The Danish Government's pledge to achieve complete independence from these types of energy resources by 2050 has been in the news recently. That decision will entail many difficult decisions, but it must serve as an important benchmark for all of the European Union's future environmental policies.

- Motion for a resolution: Conference on Biological Diversity - Nagoya 2010 (B7-0536/2010)

Tunne Kelam (PPE). – Mr President, I would like especially to stress my support for Amendment 11, which demands that, in the Commission's future strategies, measures should be included that officially recognise the rights of native peoples to manage the natural resources of their territories and to benefit from their use.

- Report: Veronique De Keyser (A7-0245/2010)

Salvatore Iacolino (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, I voted against this report and I am prepared to explain the reasons why. The initiative undoubtedly has its merits, because it pays a great deal of attention to a world, the sub-Saharan world in particular, in which the right to health care is still not confirmed as it ought to be.

However, compared to more important topics, which, in my opinion, include the protection of mothers and children, or rather the protection of pregnant mothers and their unborn children, particular emphasis was placed on reproductive health aspects, on which we expressed some concerns.

However, I am convinced that, in future activities carried out by Parliament, we can increase the attention paid to those communities in which the infant mortality rate – I repeat – is still particularly high and can no longer be tolerated.

Anna Záborská (PPE). – (SK) I was unable to vote for the Mrs De Keyser's report for the simple reason that I do not understand what the European policy on planned sexual and reproductive health means.

I would like to mention something of which I have personal knowledge. An important professor, a gynaecologist, abandoned his university career and made a financial and professional investment in improving health in Sub-Saharan Africa. He built clinics, in which he operated on women suffering from fistulas following difficult births. After several years, when he had already helped many women, he asked for funding from the European Union in order to expand his work. The response was negative and the reasoning absurd. He had apparently failed to fulfil the requirement to support sexual and reproductive health in his projects. I do not know what could support the sexual and reproductive health of women more than curing fistulas in the area of the genital and excretory organs. I therefore logically assume that, according to the European institutions, sexual and reproductive health is simply an abortion and anti-conception policy. These are the reasons why I was unable to vote for the report.

- Motion for a resolution: EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013 (B7-0539/2010)

Jan Březina (PPE). – (CS) I voted in favour of the resolution on the future of the cohesion policy. I want to stress that we have been working intensively on this topic, even though the official programme documents are not yet available. In this way, we are showing our determination to be a key, indispensable player in decision making on new rules for structural funds in the period after 2013.

However, I do not support the idea that it is necessary for the European Social Fund to have its own rules. I see in that the danger of creating an opportunity to remove the social fund from the cohesion policy in order to bring it closer to the richer countries and, conversely, to distance it from the reach of poorer ones. I would not like to see such a development, and no one who depends on a strong and effective cohesion policy could wish for it. I agree with the European Social Fund having its own rules to the extent that they apply to tasks and the thematic definition of its activities. On the other hand, rules in the areas of geographic eligibility, aims, guidance, monitoring and concrete mechanisms should remain common.

Tunne Kelam (PPE). – Mr President, having voted for this resolution, I would like to make three comments. First, it will be crucial to link and accommodate future cohesion policy to the EU 2020 strategy, because only this link can provide sustainable economic growth and the creation of new jobs. We also need to strengthen the role of social measures within the cohesion policy in order to address the changing democratic situation.

Second, we badly need a radical simplification of the rules of financing in order to make EU funds better available at local and NGO level. Often, we face excessive bureaucratic accountability that takes more time and energy than goes to the working-out of the projects.

Third, when preparing the framework of the next financial period, it will be important to engage, in time and on an equal level, representatives of the regions and the business sector.

Written explanations of vote

- Report: Jean Lambert (A7-0261/2010)

Roberta Angelilli (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The draft regulation, which is intended to ensure that third-country nationals are subject to the same rules for coordinating social security entitlements as EU nationals under the revised rules now represented in Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 and its implementing regulation, provides an opportunity for the European Union to guarantee a decent standard of social protection for all citizens. We must reaffirm the importance of ensuring that all European and third-country nationals receive equal treatment in relation to social security provision, because this principle is contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and is an instrument that helps complete the process of simplifying the current rules. Sharing, maintaining and furthering the values on which the EU is based, such as respect for human rights, must necessarily be accompanied by shared rules that are applied in exactly the same way without conditions or limitations of any kind. Therefore, I proudly and resolutely support the Italian position, which entails approving the regulation, because it will enable us to achieve a single system for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004, and I hope that all of the other Member States will also revise their positions and transpose the new rules into their national legislation without delay.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) I voted for this recommendation submitted by the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs because, with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and the changes to the legal foundations, the European Union is again obliged to review the rules applicable to the citizens of third countries. This recommendation by Parliament applies to the draft regulation, which is intended to ensure that third-country nationals who are legally resident within the EU and are in a cross-border situation are subject to the same rules for coordinating social security entitlements. This recommendation by Parliament proposes to approve the regulation offered by the Council and not to delay any further because the new regulation would simplify the administration of procedures and would guarantee the equal treatment of legally resident third-country nationals in the field of social security. Moreover, in terms of combating illegal immigration in Europe, this regulation clarifies the rights of Member States with regard to their powers concerning the decision for an individual to be legally resident on their territory.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Nationals of third countries legally residing in a Union country whose lives involve a relationship with the legal system of another Member State often find themselves in situations where they are unprotected or enjoy conflicting rights. There is an urgent need to prevent such situations. For these people to be treated fairly, they should be given rights and duties that are, as far as is reasonable, equivalent to those of the citizens of EU countries. This equivalence can be amply justified and coordination between legal systems can be seen as a matter of justice, not least where social benefits are concerned.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The aim of the resolution is to ensure that nationals of third countries who are legally resident in the territory of a Member State, and who are in a cross-border situation concerning at least two Member States, are subject to the same rules for coordinating social security entitlements as EU nationals under the revised rules now represented in Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 and its implementing regulation (Regulation (EC) No 987/2009).

When the Commission proposal was first introduced, the European Parliament was consulted and agreed two amendments, replacing references to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and also pointing to a high standard of social protection as an objective of the European Union, present in the existing Regulation (EC) No 859/2003. I voted for this resolution so as to ensure the adoption of the new regulation to guarantee equal treatment as regards social security for legally resident nationals of third countries.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) As Jean Lambert's report advocated, to my mind, it is essential that non-EU nationals and their families who are legally resident within the European Union have the same rights and benefits as European citizens concerning access to social security. With this vote, the European Parliament puts an end to unacceptable situations of discrimination. Nonetheless, I am disappointed that certain countries such as Denmark and the United Kingdom are not taking part in these coordination schemes for non-EU nationals. How can the European Union succeed in setting up simplified and harmonised procedures for non-EU nationals when some Member States prefer not to follow this common approach? There is, admittedly, a real risk of an 'à la carte Europe', yet faced with the reluctance of some, entrenched in their national identities, we must act.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – The draft regulation is intended to ensure that third-country nationals who are legally resident within the EU and are in a cross-border situation concerning at least two Member States are subject to the same rules for coordinating social security entitlements as EU nationals under the abovementioned regulations. The adoption of this legislation constitutes a major step in ensuring equal treatment to third-country nationals across the territory of the EU. These people are often the victims of great discrimination on our territory and pursuant to this legislation, third-country nationals will be able to move within the EU with the same guarantees when it comes to their social security entitlements as EU nationals.

Krzysztof Lisek (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Ladies and gentlemen, I was overjoyed at the positive result in today's vote in Parliament on the liberalisation of the visa regime for Western Balkan countries. After the scrapping of the visa requirement for the citizens of Serbia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in December 2009, corresponding decisions regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania have been eagerly awaited. Opening the European Union to further Balkan nations will bring many positive results for all parties concerned. Firstly, this is an unprecedented improvement for ordinary citizens who can now experience the European Union for themselves and can travel freely in all the Member States. Secondly, this is another extremely significant step towards the aim of stabilising the situation in the region and creating a positive climate for further reforms and the future integration of all Balkan countries into the European Union. However, we should also take the corresponding decisions on visa requirements for the citizens of Kosovo. The inhabitants of this country should not remain the only totally isolated nation in the Balkans, and the privileges linked with free travel throughout Europe should also be extended to them. I am extremely happy with the initiative taken by the European Parliament to abolish the visa regime for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. This is a further step towards the inclusion of the Balkan countries in Europe, and it has my strong support.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This text ensures the provision of social protection for non-EU nationals throughout the EU. In that sense, it represents a step forward. It is, however, regrettable that the situation of illegal immigrants is totally

ignored. People living illegally also have the right to be protected. In Europe as elsewhere, it should be forbidden to declare that any human being, whoever they are, will not be protected.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) No nationals of third countries living in EU territory who are legally resident should be subjected to discrimination of any kind. They must also have, where necessary, access to social security without any conflicts between the various legal systems of the Member States. That is why it is so important to adopt this directive.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The draft regulation is intended to ensure that third-country nationals who are legally resident within the EU and are in a cross-border situation concerning at least two Member States are subject to the same rules for coordinating social security entitlements as EU nationals under the revised rules now represented in Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 and its implementing regulation (Regulation (EC) No 987/2009). When the Commission proposal was first introduced, the European Parliament was consulted and agreed two amendments, replacing references to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and also pointing to a high standard of social protection as an objective of the European Union, present in the existing Regulation No 859/2003. Both these amendments have been incorporated into the position of the Council at first reading of 26 July 2010 as recitals 4 and 7. The Council is proposing a small number of amendments: it has included some recitals relating to the participation of certain Member States under the proposal's legal basis of Article 79(2)(b). (Recitals 17, 18, 19.) Regrettably, Denmark is not participating in the coordination arrangements for third-country nationals. Ireland has opted to participate, but the UK has chosen not to participate and will therefore continue to operate the existing rules.

- Report: Inés Ayala Sender (A7-0254/2010)

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I support the nomination of Lazaros Stavrou Lazarou as a Member of the Court of Auditors. His skills in the areas of public administration, the International Tax Programme and economics are outstanding, as is his vast experience in the supervision, monitoring and auditing of public accounts, and in combating fraud, both in his country and at European level. From his hearing and from how he has performed his duties, I would stress his acknowledgement of and the value he attaches to the importance of implementing IT systems and automating services, as well as the decentralisation of procedures so as to make public information and institutions more efficient, transparent and reliable.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – Although the vote was secret, I have no problem in acknowledging that, as Lazaros Stavrou Lazarou fulfils the conditions laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, we have delivered a favourable opinion on his nomination as a Member of the Court of Auditors.

- Report: Inés Ayala Sender (A7-0255/2010)

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The nomination of Gijns M. de Vries to the Court of Auditors will definitely represent an added value for the institution, not least at the level of guaranteeing institutional cooperation within the European Union and of evaluating the resources of the Member States' supervision entities. Of his experience with the Netherlands Court of Auditors, his national government and the European Parliament, I would stress his commitment to overseeing the legality of public procurement processes and his determination in combating fraud and corruption, as well as his guarantees of

responsibility, independence and suitability in the decision-making processes of the Court of Auditors.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Although the vote was secret, I have no problem in acknowledging that, as Gijs M. de Vries fulfils the conditions laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, we have delivered a favourable opinion on his nomination as a Member of the Court of Auditors.

- Reports: Inés Ayala Sender (A7-0254/2010) and (A7-0255/2010)

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Court of Auditors is an institution that inspects the European Union's income and outgoings to verify their legality, as well as verifying good financial management. It operates with complete independence. Within this spirit, the nomination of the individuals of which it is made up must be governed by capability and independence criteria.

So, on the Council's initiative, individuals from several EU countries have been put forward for the Court of Auditors. They all submitted their *curriculum vitae*, responded to a written questionnaire and had hearings before the Committee on Budgetary Control. The majority of them argued their cases well enough to justify their nomination to the Court of Auditors, where they will carry out their duties capably and independently.

- Report: Barbara Matera (A7-0259/2010)

George Becali (NI), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of this report. I too, like the rapporteur herself, believe that the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund must support workers made redundant as a result of structural changes in global trade patterns. The fact that the budget authority has already approved eight proposals for mobilising the fund in 2010 highlights the flexibility of the procedures, proving that we have successfully identified new resources and are allocating them rapidly enough to Member States. I also welcome the fact that the Commission has identified an alternative source of payment appropriations to the unused allocations from the ESF.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ES) I support this initiative to help people who have been made redundant by the 82 businesses in Galicia to re-enter the labour market. This does not, under any circumstances, replace the responsibilities of the businesses under national legislation and collective agreements.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Given that Spain has requested assistance in respect of cases concerning 703 redundancies in 82 enterprises operating in the NACE Revision 2 Division 14 (manufacture of wearing apparel) in the NUTS II region of Galicia, I voted in favour of the resolution because I agree with the Commission's proposal and with the amendments to it tabled by Parliament. I agree that, in accordance with Article 6 of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) Regulation, it should be ensured that the EGF supports the reintegration of individual redundant workers into employment. I also reiterate that assistance from the EGF must not replace actions which are the responsibility of companies by virtue of national law or collective agreements, nor measures restructuring companies or sectors.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) A total of 702 redundancies at 82 textile firms justifies the Spanish authorities' application to mobilise the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. The rising number of redundancies in the Galician textile and clothing industry is adding to the external perception that all its European counterparts are in a similar weak

position (not least in my country, where this sector has been particularly badly hit) due to exposure to international competition, particularly from developing countries, where production costs are lower. The international crisis that is now being felt has helped to exacerbate this state of affairs. I hope that the workers who have been made redundant will soon be able to resume their working lives.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) In the face of the impact of this global economic and financial crisis on the labour market, I would stress the importance of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) being properly implemented. Unfortunately, very little use is made of the EGF: of the EUR 500 million in funding made available through it this year, only 11% was requested to fund aid plans for workers who have been made redundant. Given the high rate of unemployment, this situation is worrying and incomprehensible.

I would also stress the fact that, following successive warnings and reports, an alternative source of payment appropriations to unused ESF funds has been set up. Given the effects of this crisis, which are especially being felt in the textiles sector, I would stress the importance of this plan of EUR 1 844 700 in support of the 703 workers made redundant from 82 companies in Galicia's textiles sector. In contrast to this initiative of the Spanish Government, I find it regrettable that the Portuguese Government has not intervened in this way in the districts of Braga and Viana do Castelo, which border Galicia and have high rates of unemployment because of successive companies going out of business.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) Three more applications have been made to mobilise the Solidarity Fund, each corresponding to a factory closure in Europe, including that of a Galician textile factory, in Spain. Altogether, several hundred more workers have been made redundant. It is worth remembering once again that this sector is also enduring a serious crisis in Portugal, where it is suffering the effects of the liberalisation of world trade particularly intensely, while none of the actions needed to safeguard it have been taken. These effects may now become even worse following the decision to intensify the liberalisation measures for Asian textiles. This step was taken on the pretext of providing humanitarian aid to Pakistan, whereas in reality, it fulfils the desires of the major importers in the European Union. Every new application to mobilise this fund increases the urgency of the measures that we have been advocating, which are aimed at combating unemployment effectively, boosting economic activity, eradicating jobs with no security, and reducing working hours without cutting pay. These measures also involve fighting company relocations and, overall, require a complete break with the neoliberal policies that are visibly causing an economic and social disaster in the countries of the EU.

Estelle Grelier (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for Mrs Matera's report on mobilising the Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) for the workers of the clothing industry in Spain. As I said in September during the debate on the EGF's future after 2013, I am disappointed that this fund, set up to support workers made redundant 'for reasons of recession or globalisation', is currently not financially guaranteed in the European budget. Indeed, I do not believe that tapping into the financial resources of other European programmes to finance the EGF is a viable solution in the long run. Therefore, when the Committee on Budgets voted for mobilising the EGF for the Spanish employees mentioned in the Matera report, I pointed out, along with the Belgian Socialist MEP Mr Daerden, the need to work towards defining a separate budget heading for this funding. What is at stake here is the European Union's credibility in supporting citizens affected by economic instability.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) I am abstaining out of consideration for the Spanish textile industry workers sacrificed in the name of sacrosanct globalisation. In the situation into which they are plunged as a result of the neoliberal policies advocated by the European Union, one could vote against the beggarly sum that the European elites are granting them. However, the little which is being given may relieve their hardship. This does not make the logic of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund any less intolerable. It endorses the relocation of textile production. It sanctions the appetite for profit of socially irresponsible billionaires like Manuel Jove. In the kingdom of the Eurocrats, the only price to be paid for a clear conscience is the community.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The EU is an area of solidarity, and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) is a part of that. This support is essential for helping the unemployed and victims of relocations that occur in the context of globalisation. An increasing number of companies are relocating, taking advantage of reduced labour costs in various countries, particularly China and India, often to the detriment of countries that respect workers' rights. The aim of the EGF is to help workers who are victims of the relocation of companies, and it is fundamental in facilitating access to new employment in the future. The EGF has already been used in the past by other EU countries, so we should now grant this aid to the 703 workers made redundant from 82 clothing industry enterprises in the region of Galicia. That is why I voted as I did.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE), *in writing*. – (SK) I am delighted to see the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund being utilised in the affected regions mentioned previously and I totally agree with this. I believe, namely, that the entire process, from drawing up applications through to processing and obtaining the final decision of the budget authority, has so far been rather cumbersome and complex, according to the experience of many countries.

For example, in 2009, the contributions requested from the fund were, on average, around EUR 5 552 700, and 30 of the applications submitted by 13 Member States related to 17 branches. However, the budget authority last year approved 10 financial contributions from the EGF amounting, in total, to EUR 52 349 000, which represents just 10.5% of the maximum annual sum that can be used from this fund.

One of the reasons is principally a lack of experience with the processes of the fund and the long period of financial uncertainty when awaiting the decision of the budget authority.

I believe that the simplified procedures for assessments and decision making introduced at the end of 2009 will simplify and speed up the submission of applications for support from the fund and will accordingly bring effective assistance to employees who have lost jobs as a result of changes in the structure of world trade.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The same applies to this case as to the previous Danish case. Employees who are being made redundant through no fault of their own, or because of the financial and economic crisis triggered by speculators in the USA and the United Kingdom, need rapid help. Spain has already submitted an application for financial assistance from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) on 5 February 2010 as a result of redundancies in 82 companies in NACE Revision 2 Division 14 (manufacture of wearing apparel) in a single NUTS II region, Galicia (ES11) in Spain, and has supplemented this application with additional information by 11 May 2010. The application complies with the requirements for determining the financial contribution as laid down in Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 1927/2006. The Commission proposes to mobilise an amount of

EUR 1 844 700. The EGF should, therefore, be mobilised in order to provide a financial contribution for the application submitted by Spain, which is why I have voted in favour of Mrs Matera's report.

Vilja Savisaar-Toomast (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ET) I voted in favour of this report and also the two following reports concerning the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. I think that the European Union must support people who have become unemployed as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. Today's reports have shown that help is needed both by countries in economic difficulties like Spain, and by one of Europe's richest welfare countries, Denmark. At the same time, I must unfortunately say with regret that, up to now, we have not had the opportunity to vote for a similar report affecting Estonia. I hope that our government learns from the actions of other Member States and also participates in supporting our unemployed.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) In February 2010, Spain submitted a request for assistance to use the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) in connection with the redundancies which were made in 82 firms from the Galicia region participating in the clothing sector. I voted for the European Parliament Resolution on the mobilisation of the EGF for granting aid to those made redundant. Trade deregulation in the textiles and clothing industry has brought about far-reaching changes in global trade patterns, with the upshot being a general trend to relocate production outside the EU to countries where production costs are lower, such as China and Morocco. Furthermore, the economic crisis has also triggered a large number of bankruptcies in the textile industry, resulting in a huge wave of redundancies. There were 32 700 redundancies in the Galicia region between 2007 and 2009, including 4 414 in the textiles industry, with women accounting for 80% of the redundancies. I believe that the procedure for allocating these funds must be simplified to make the EGF easy to access for firms affected by the impact of the financial and economic crisis and by the changes in global trade patterns. I must stress the important role played by the EGF in reintegrating redundant workers into the labour market.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) Ladies and gentlemen, like Spain and Denmark, Lithuania is aware of the potential good that the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) can do. Lithuania received a total of EUR 2.9 million in aid from the EGF, which was earmarked for workers from the construction and household goods manufacturing sectors that were badly affected by the crisis. However, the fund still has to prove its worth. Set up as a rapid counter-measure, now the EGF has slowed and become complicated due to bureaucracy. The main drawback is the necessary mobilisation of the fund. On average it takes 294 days to approve applications. As the *Financial Times* wrote this week, more than 37 000 workers throughout Europe are still waiting for aid from the fund. To date, only EUR 140 million of the EGF's total amount available (EUR 2 billion) has been paid out. The fund's money is also distributed unevenly. Only 6% of payments are granted to projects in countries where the gross domestic product is lower than the EU average. The EGF must be more flexible if we want to avoid drowning in uncertainty. Many Member States, including Lithuania, are suitable candidates for other funds, which require less cofinancing and bureaucracy.

- **Report: Barbara Matera (A7-0258/2010)**

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Given that Denmark has requested assistance in respect of cases concerning 1 443 redundancies in three companies of the

Danfoss Group operating in the NACE Revision 2 Divisions 27 and 28 in the NUTS II region of Syddanmark, I voted in favour of the resolution because I agree with the Commission's proposal and with the amendments to it tabled by Parliament. I agree that the functioning and the added value of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund should be evaluated in the context of the general assessment of the programmes and various other instruments created by the interinstitutional agreement of 17 May 2006 within the process of the 2007-2013 multiannual financial framework mid-term review

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Additional support for redundant workers is also proving necessary in a country that few would imagine would be affected by such hardships, as it is generally regarded as being more able to compete in the global market than most other EU Member States. Nonetheless, even Denmark is now feeling the effects of globalisation, which is affecting it in sectors that one might have thought would be more immune to competition, such as the manufacturing of electrical goods, machinery and equipment. This worrying fact alerts us to the severity of the economic crisis in which we are immersed and to the need to find increasingly effective and creative ways of increasing Europe's ability to compete while, at the same time, helping workers who have been made redundant return to work. The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund is one such mechanism.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I would stress the potential contribution of this assistance plan financed by the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) for the reintegration of redundant workers and their social rehabilitation to a particularly tragic case like three companies of the Danfoss Group going out of business. All of these companies were located in Syddanmark, Denmark, and all of them went bust over a three-month period in 2009, affecting 1 443 workers in a sector – the manufacture of machines and electronic equipment – that has been particularly hard hit by this crisis.

I would stress again that, unfortunately, the EGF has been very sparingly utilised in the face of Europe's high rates of unemployment. Of the EUR 500 million in funding made available through the EGF this year, only 11% was requested to fund aid plans for workers who have been made redundant as a direct result of the global financial and economic crisis. I would, however, stress the fact that, following successive warnings and reports, an alternative source of payment appropriations to unused ESF funds has been set up.

Estelle Grelier (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted for Mrs Matera's report on mobilising the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) for the workers of the Danfoss Group in Denmark. As I said in September during the debate on the EGF's future after 2013, I am disappointed that this fund, set up to support workers made redundant 'for reasons of recession or globalisation', is currently not financially guaranteed in the European budget. Indeed, I do not believe that tapping into the financial resources of other European programmes to finance the EGF is a viable solution in the long run. Therefore, when the Committee on Budgets voted for mobilising the EGF for the Danish employees mentioned in the Matera report, I pointed out, along with the Belgian Socialist MEP Mr Daerden, the need to work towards defining a separate budget heading for this funding. What is at stake here is the European Union's credibility in supporting citizens affected by economic instability.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (FR) I am abstaining out of consideration for the Danish workers ill-treated by globalisation. In the situation into which they are plunged as a result of the neoliberal policies advocated by the European Union, one could

feel entitled to vote against the beggarly sum that the Eurocracy is reluctantly granting them. However, the little which is being given may ease their hardship. This does not make the logic of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund any less despicable. It endorses the relocations that the Danfoss Group has gone ahead with in order to increase its profits.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The EU is an area of solidarity, and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) is a part of that. This support is essential for helping the unemployed and victims of relocations that occur in the context of globalisation. An increasing number of companies are relocating, taking advantage of reduced labour costs in various countries, particularly China and India, often to the detriment of countries that respect workers' rights.

The aim of the EGF is to help workers who are victims of the relocation of companies, and it is fundamental in facilitating access to new employment in the future. The EGF has already been used in the past by other EU countries, so we should now grant this aid to the 1 443 workers made redundant from three companies of the Danfoss Group operating in the NACE Revision 2 Divisions 27 and 28 in the NUTS II region of Syddanmark. That is why I voted as I did.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) The European Union has put in place legislative and budgetary instruments to provide additional support for those employees affected by the consequences of far-reaching structural changes in patterns of world trade and to help reintegrate them into the labour market. It is also possible to help employees who have been made redundant as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. I believe this to be particularly important.

Now Denmark has submitted an application referring to the mobilisation of a global amount of EUR 8 893 336. It concerns 1 443 redundancies (of which 1 010 are targeted for support) that occurred in three companies in the Danfoss Group operating in NACE Revision 2 Divisions 27 and 28 (manufacture of electrical equipment, manufacture of machinery and equipment n.e.c.) in the NUTS II region of Syddanmark, during the four-month reference period from 1 March 2009 to 30 June 2009. I have voted in favour of the planned measures to ensure that support is provided quickly for the workers affected and for reasons of European solidarity among the Member States.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (DA) I voted in favour of the report because money from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund goes to workers affected by collective redundancies. However, I believe that there are a number of problems with this particular fund. For example, by far the most money paid out from the fund goes to the richest countries within the EU. My vote should not be perceived as support for the EU's 'subsidy gravy train', either. I believe that it is a waste of money for Denmark to send money to the EU only for it to be sent back to Denmark after having done the rounds through the bureaucratic system.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted for the European Parliament Resolution on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) for the Danfoss Group from Denmark because I believe that mobilising the EGF is an absolute must during the current economic crisis. On 8 September 2009, Denmark submitted the request for financial assistance for mobilising the EGF in the case of the Danfoss Group, which made 1 443 employees redundant. The economic and financial crisis has led to a slump in demand for mechanical and electronic equipment. Trends in the machinery and equipment production sector changed dramatically in the EU in Q4 2008 in both Denmark

and Germany, where falls in production in excess of 25% were seen. Sales of Danfoss mechanical and electronic equipment fell in 2008 by up to 52% in Europe, 48% in the US and 23% in the Asia-Pacific region. Due to the competition from Asian firms in this sector, whose wage costs are significantly lower than those in the EU, the Danfoss Group has gradually relocated its production from Denmark to third countries, which has had a serious impact on the labour market. I call on the Commission to develop an ambitious, green industrial policy, capable of guaranteeing the EU's global competitiveness and preserving jobs in the EU.

- Report: Barbara Matera (A7-0257/2010)

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Considering Denmark's requests for assistance regarding the 198 cases of dismissal at the Linak Company, part of the electromechanical sector in Syddanmark's NUTS II region, I voted in favour of the resolution as I am in agreement with the European Commission's motion and with the respective amendments introduced by the European Parliament. In explaining its motives, I agree that the Commission's motion includes clear and detailed information on the request, analyses the criteria for eligibility, and explains the reasons that have led to its approval, in compliance with Parliament's defined requests.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Another Danish electromechanical company, Linak, has been hit by the effects of globalisation. The people most severely affected by this are the least qualified workers, in a badly depressed region that is giving political decision makers particular cause for concern. In this and other cases, older workers engender additional concern and must benefit from support measures targeted specially at them.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Considering the impact of the current economic and financial crisis on the labour market, I voted in favour of releasing EUR 1 213 508 from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) for a plan supporting the reintegration into the labour market of the 198 people dismissed from the Linak A/S Company, a manufacturer of electronic equipment in Denmark's Syddanmark region. I reiterate my warning over the extremely rare utilisation of the EGF, in spite of the high unemployment rates in Europe. I reiterate the need for the EGF to have its own funding, consisting of its own budget line for this purpose.

Estelle Grelier (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for Mrs Matera's report on mobilising the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) for the workers of Linak A/S in Denmark. As I said in September during the debate on the EGF's future after 2013, I am disappointed that this fund, set up to support workers made redundant 'for reasons of recession or globalisation', is currently not financially guaranteed in the European budget. Indeed, I do not believe that tapping into the financial resources of other European schemes to finance the EGF is a viable solution in the long run. Therefore, when the Committee on Budgets voted for mobilising the EGF for the Danish employees mentioned in the Matera report, I pointed out, along with the Belgian Socialist MEP Mr Daerden, the need to work towards defining a separate budget heading for this funding. What is at stake here is the European Union's credibility in supporting citizens affected by economic instability.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) I am abstaining out of consideration for the Danish workers of the Linak Group who have been sacrificed on the altar of globalisation. In the situation into which they are plunged as a result of the neoliberal policies advocated by the European Union, one could be inclined to vote against, given

the pitiful amount of this handout. However, the little that is being given may help to ease their pain.

This does not make the rationale of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund any less intolerable. It endorses the rationale that brings a leading international company such as Linak to relocate with the aim of increasing its profits, the amount of which it does not even have the decency to disclose.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The EU is a space for solidarity and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) is framed within it. This support is fundamental to helping the unemployed and victims of relocation which occur in the context of globalisation. The number of companies relocating, taking advantage of reduced labour costs in various countries, namely China and India, is ever greater, with harmful effects for countries that respect workers' rights.

The EGF's purpose is to assist workers who fall victim to company relocation and is vital in facilitating access to a new job. The EGF has been used in the past by other EU countries, and should be used now to assist the 198 cases of dismissal at the Linak Company, which is part of the electromechanical sector in Syddanmark's NUTS II region. This is the reason for my vote.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE), *in writing*. – (SK) I am delighted to see the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund being utilised in the affected regions mentioned previously and I totally agree with this. I believe, namely, that the entire process, from drawing up applications through to processing and obtaining the final decision of the budget authority, has so far been rather cumbersome and complex, according to the experience of many countries. For example, in 2009, the contributions requested from the fund were, on average, around EUR 5 552 700, and 30 of the applications submitted by 13 Member States related to 17 branches. However, the budget authority last year approved 10 financial contributions from the EGF amounting, in total, to EUR 52 349 000, which represents just 10.5% of the maximum annual sum that can be used from this fund. One of the reasons is principally a lack of experience with the processes of the fund, and the long period of financial uncertainty when awaiting the decision of the budget authority. I believe that the simplified procedures for assessments and decision making introduced at the end of 2009 will simplify and speed up the submission of applications for support from the fund and will accordingly bring effective assistance to employees who have lost jobs as a result of changes in the structure of world trade.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (DA) I voted in favour of the report because money from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund goes to workers affected by collective redundancies. However, I believe that there are a number of problems with this particular fund. For example, by far the most money paid out from the fund goes to the richest countries within the EU. My vote should not be perceived as support for the EU's 'subsidy gravy train', either. I believe that it is a waste of money for Denmark to send money to the EU only for it to be sent back to Denmark after having done the rounds through the bureaucratic system.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for the resolution on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) for supporting the persons made redundant from the family firm Linak A/S, located in Sønderborg, Denmark. On 8 September 2009, Denmark submitted the request for a financial contribution of EUR 1 213 508 (65% of

the total budget required) for supporting 1 39 employees made redundant from Linak A/S. These redundancies coincided with another large wave of redundancies from the Danfoss Group in Sønderborg, southern Denmark. I believe that Member States are responsible for supporting the reintegration of every redundant worker into employment. The EGF offers Member States the opportunity to support workers affected by the global financial and economic crisis and the major changes in global trade patterns. In Romania, 381 296 workers lost their jobs between March 2008 and March 2010, including 13 667 in the county of Galați alone. I think that other Member States, too, which have not requested the EGF's mobilisation so far, including Romania, must examine and follow the example of the states which have used the EGF to support redundant workers due to the economic and financial crisis.

- Reports: Barbara Matera (A7-0259/2010) and (A7-0258/2010)

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I welcome the vote in plenary on mobilising the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in favour of Spanish and Danish citizens. Created in 2006, this European fund is intended to provide assistance to employees made redundant following a process of restructuring. The rules were changed in 2009 to allow for better use of any appropriations allocated to the fund which, hitherto, had not all been utilised. The commitment to help more than 1 500 Spanish and Danish employees via this fund is therefore very good news. It is worth emphasising the importance and relevance of this fund in these times of economic recession that we are experiencing. Despite its temporary nature, the fund should be maintained, at least for as long as it can prove its usefulness.

- Reports: Barbara Matera (A7-0259/2010), (A7-0258/2010) and (A7-0257/2010)

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – The EGF is a crucial fund in the EU, the scope of which has been widened in order to provide support for those who have been made redundant as a result of the crisis. It is imperative that these funds are made available to those who really need them in an expedient and effective manner. For this reason, I have agreed with the rapporteur and have voted in favour of these reports.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – With this important vote, the EP asks the institutions involved to make the necessary efforts to accelerate the mobilisation of the EGF. It recalls the institutions' commitment to ensuring a smooth and rapid procedure for the adoption of the decisions on the mobilisation of the EGF, providing one-off, time-limited individual support geared to helping workers who have suffered redundancies as a result of globalisation and the financial and economic crisis. It emphasises the role that the EGF can play in the reintegration of workers made redundant into the labour market. It stresses that, in accordance with Article 6 of the EGF Regulation, it should be ensured that the EGF supports the reintegration of individual redundant workers into employment. It reiterates that assistance from the EGF must not replace actions which are the responsibility of companies by virtue of national law or collective agreements, nor measures restructuring companies or sectors.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The three reports by Mrs Matera which we are voting on today concern support for 82 companies in the clothing industry in the Galicia region of Spain and two companies in the engineering and mechatronics industries in the Syddanmark region of Denmark. The financial assistance that has been authorised

will provide support for a total of 2 344 people and will help to reintegrate them into the labour market.

- Report: Veronique Mathieu (A7-0253/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for the refusal to grant discharge to the director of the European Police College in respect of the implementation of the College budget for the financial year 2008 on the basis of the excellent report by my friend and colleague, Véronique Mathieu, who is a member of the Committee on Budgetary Control. All the arguments set forth in the report justify this decision. However, I am surprised that the annual accounts have not been approved, even if they are not subject to significant observations on the part of the European Court of Auditors. Whereas the report by my colleague, Véronique Mathieu, approved by the Committee on Budgetary Control, proposes three votes (refusal to grant discharge, closing of the accounts and resolution), I find it odd that in actual fact, only two items were put to the plenary vote: the discharge and the resolution. Very strange ... to my mind, nothing prevented the accounts from being closed. We end up with a bizarre accounting situation where, in October 2010, the 2008 accounts are not closed, the financial year 2009 is over and that of 2010 only has a few weeks left. Understand that one if you can!

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The recommendation of the specialist committee to refuse to grant this European institution discharge was supported right across the board, which means that the reputation of this 'Police Academy' will be tarnished forever. This tragicomic situation where the European Police College is not being granted a discharge in the light of certain fraudulent financial activities shows us that there are no bounds when it comes to corruption. In other words, it is precisely the institution set up to protect us from criminals (indirectly through providing professional training for police officers) which is ending up in the dock.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) I voted in favour of the report, so as to refuse discharge to the European Police College in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008, because the investigation into the misuse of funds has not yet been completed. I also voted in favour, because I agree that it is unacceptable for an organisation financed by Europe not to have sound and transparent management of its finances after so many years. The new Director of the College may have presented an action plan, but it is not sufficient, nor is it as detailed as it should be. Finally, refusing the College discharge for 2008 will send a strong message about the need to improve its *modus operandi* in order to put a stop to poor money management.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) In view of the irregularities detected and the inability of the European Police College to account for its budgetary and financial situation to Parliament, I agree with the rapporteur's decision to refuse to grant the Director of the College discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2008.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The European Police College has had difficulties complying with the standards of good governance expected of any regulatory agency. Since 2006, repeated audits have found problems in the College's compliance with financial regulations, its staff regulations and accounting system, as well as inadequacies in its budget management, human resources, public contracting procedures and in the standards applied to expenses in organising courses. According to the resolution, only in

2014 can we expect improvements in the College, when its multi-year plan will have been fully implemented. I do not agree that the College needs a minimum of nine years (2006-2014) to attain the acceptable level of good governance expected of a regulatory agency.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) Having considered the information on the European Police College's actions and bad accounts management, I support Mrs Mathieu's proposal to refuse the Academy's director budgetary discharge for the 2008 financial year. We are deluged with a vast number of sometimes pointless EU agencies, but the CEPOL is an important body for fighting crime and maintaining security and public order. 2007 statistics inform us that CEPOL was able to call on an annual financial budget of EUR 7.5 million. It is in the interests of all citizens, particularly given the difficult economic and financial situation we face at present, to be able to count on efficient EU agencies that are able to use the budgets granted to them in a transparent and responsible fashion. The controlling role performed by the European Parliament is important in establishing a veto where management processes are unclear, as in this case. For this reason, I shall be voting in favour of the rapporteur's proposal.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – The European Police College (CEPOL), which became an agency in 2006, has faced severe problems since its creation in abiding by minimum good administration norms to which all EU agencies are submitted. Whilst I voted in favour of the report and the decision to refuse to grant a budget discharge for 2008, this is the first time that a discharge has been used against an individual organisation. Nevertheless, I question the meaning of the discharge and how useful it is as a tool, two years after the event and where, as in this case, management and personnel may well have changed. Thus, it is vital that we investigate whether very small agencies can be effective and can meet the administrative requirements of the Financial Regulations with a very small staff.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) Last week, the Committee on International Trade voted unanimously in favour of postponing the granting of discharge for the 2008 budget of the European Police College (CEPOL) and against the closure of the accounts for the same. On account of serious deficits with regard to compliance with the financial and staff regulations, the European Parliament has also voted, with an overwhelming majority, against granting discharge to CEPOL and, hence, also against a positive closure of the 2008 budget. It is nice to see that Parliament has fulfilled its task in this discharge procedure and has sent out a clear signal against negligent mismanagement. I would like to congratulate Mrs Mathieu on this report.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) All European institutions which depend on the European Union budget must be rigorously inspected by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with an auditing function. Inspection must verify whether Community funds are being appropriately used, whether these institutions are complying with their defined goals, and whether any resources are being wasted.

Generally speaking, based on evaluations of known inspections, with rare exceptions, we can state that the institutions in question are using available funding correctly and are complying with their set goals. Nevertheless, according to the rapporteur's judgment, this is not the case with the European Police College, given its various irregularities and the inadequacy in its audits. This is the reason for my vote.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – With this vote, the EP refuses to grant the Director of the European Police College discharge in respect of the implementation of the College's budget for the financial year 2008.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), in writing. – (LT) Ladies and gentlemen, the rapporteur is right to express concern about a lack of transparency in the European Police College's procurement procedures. Let us hope that the investigation being carried out by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) will be comprehensive and scrupulous and will help to bring more clarity to the matter. However, this issue is related to a much greater problem – to the frequent lack of integrity and professionalism within police and security forces throughout Europe. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have reported a particularly high number of cases throughout Europe where the police exceeded its powers and used illegal investigation methods. In most cases, institutions failed to carry out investigations and punish lawbreakers according to international standards, and this increases the level of impunity. Often, victims become easy targets because of their minority status, whether it is due to their ethnicity or their political views. Strong police forces need a strong and honest Rule of Law and judicial independence. The European Police College has noble objectives: to promote common European policing standards, cross-border cooperation in the fight against crime and uphold the rule of law and legislation. Whether it is through this or another forum, the most important thing is that these objectives are achieved.

- Report: Tanja Fajon (A7-0256/2010)

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) This Parliament resolution is particularly important for abolishing the visa regime for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. A visa-free regime brings about the realisation of one of the main fundamental rights in Europe – freedom of movement through all Member States. It is very important to make every effort to deliver visa-free travel for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania as soon as possible. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania have made significant progress in the last few months and important talks have been held with these countries. Once these countries have been granted a visa-free regime, young people will be able to travel, learn and study abroad. Furthermore, the risk of even greater ethnic and political instability would be lowered, political and economic cooperation in the region will be strengthened, and popular support for the EU and the prospect of European integration will increase.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Twenty-one years have passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall, but Europe remains divided, with citizens still requiring visas to travel freely in the EU. I come from a country which lived for almost half a century under the harshest Communist regime without any right to free travel. Subsequently, Romania has needed 15 years to persuade Europe that its citizens are not second-class and should enjoy a fundamental human right. The EU does not and never has advocated artificially putting up partitions, but has brought all Europeans to the same table by dismantling borders. The European Parliament has constantly promoted the notion of abolishing the regime imposing visa requirements because it is aware of the psychological impact which the current situation has on those who are still obliged to purchase visas to go and visit family members settled in EU countries, to go and study, or simply to travel. It is high time, 21 years after the reunification of Europe, to put an end to visas for inhabitants of Europe who would like to travel within the EU.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this legislative motion to recognise the importance of allowing citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina the right to free movement in the European Union through a system of visa exemption, which is to take effect this year. This is a process which follows on from recent events with Serbia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. My opinion is that this vote represents an important step for European integration and political and economic cooperation in this region. However, it is still important to guide our efforts in order to proceed with liberalising the visa system in Kosovo, which constitutes the only area in the Western Balkans where the opening of negotiations is not yet planned.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) I voted in favour of the report because I believe in the inalienable right of free movement of all citizens, the right of free movement, regardless of nationality. This report finally makes the next step towards eliminating visa requirements for the citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately, however, we must not overlook the fact that, in order to achieve the liberalisation of visa requirements, states must use biometric passports, which I oppose because, in my opinion, they infringe the principle of the protection of citizens' personal data.

Corina Crețu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for the adoption of the proposal for a regulation because it will help implement some of the EU's prior commitments regarding the free movement of persons throughout the whole continent. This will allow citizens from certain Western Balkan countries to feel that they, too, are part of the process of reuniting the continent of Europe. I believe that we cannot progress with our desire to create a European identity and citizenship without removing the barriers preventing freedom of movement on the continent between EU Member States and their neighbours. I welcome the receptiveness shown towards extending this facility to Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The inclusion of citizens from these countries with their fellow citizens from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in terms of enjoying the right of free movement in the EU will also help close some of the wounds of the recent past. These are a few of the arguments explaining how I voted.

George Sabin Cutaș (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) The Balkans, with their reputation as the 'powder keg of Europe', remain primarily, in spite of the progress made in recent years, a potential hotbed of interethnic tension, with political instability and the economic and social crisis added to this. Bosnia and Herzegovina provides the most recent example of this where, unfortunately, in spite of all the efforts made, the mood of confrontation persists between the communities still divided by the wounds of war.

I believe that dismantling the walls which still divide the continent will boost the process of reform and reconciliation in this part of Europe. Since lifting the visa requirements for Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia last December, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania have made significant progress, as indicated in the report, which therefore no longer justifies their isolation and separation. However, one issue which remains unresolved in this region is the problem of Kosovo, which is not even recognised as an independent state by many countries, including the EU. This aspect must be a focus of our concern in the near future as it may set a dangerous precedent for secessionist actions on ethnic grounds.

Mário David (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) It is with great pleasure that I am voting in favour of the European Union's recognition and verification of suitable conditions for the liberalisation of the visa system for new states on our continent, in this case, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. I regret, however, that with regard to other countries, namely

Ukraine and Croatia, the European Union is not extending the same welcome and that countries that have emerged and acquired their sovereignty and independence from the ex-USSR are not judged worthy of the same recognition, merely for this reason (of being ex-USSR).

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of Mrs Fajon's report, because the results of the evaluation missions and reports have shown that progress has been made by Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in fulfilling the requirements made of them, enabling these countries to be included on the list of third countries whose nationals are exempt from the requirement to be in possession of a visa in order to enter the Schengen area.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Those who remember the tensions and conflicts that devastated the Western Balkans cannot fail to see that considerable progress has now been made towards the pacification and stabilisation of the region. It is only natural that the Union should have wished to help bring down the barriers that separate it from the majority of the Balkan States and to allow their nationals to access the EU without requiring a visa. I am in favour of abolishing barriers to the movement of people as a matter of principle, and I therefore endorse the removal of the barriers in question. At the same time, I believe that facilitating the movement of Balkan nationals within European territory should be accompanied by improved cross-border cooperation and more fruitful information exchange with their countries of origin in order to tackle the expansion of criminal activities by gangs originating there.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I strongly support the goal of abolishing visas for all countries in the Western Balkans. The elimination of visas for citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in December 2009 was an important step in their integration with Europe. The visa exemption system is of great importance in people's lives, given that it strengthens relations between peoples and allows consolidation of the principle of freedom of movement as one of Europe's basic rights.

The guarantee that the European Union will extend visa exemption to the two countries, especially to Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the very near future, at the beginning of autumn 2010, will reduce the risk of greater political and ethnic instability, strengthen political and economic cooperation in the region, and increase popular support for the EU and the prospects for European integration, as well as broaden the horizons of its people and restrain extremist and anti-European sentiment. I voted in favour of this resolution for visa exemption so that Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania could benefit from this as quickly as possible.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We are in favour of abolishing the visa requirement for nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania as soon as possible. These countries were denied the possibility in 2009, when the visa regime began to be abolished for all Western Balkan countries.

This decision 'rewards' the ability of these countries to 'deliver the necessary reforms'. Thus, they say, we are opening the 'door' to countries that 'try their best to please us'. The question that arises is this: what price are the peoples of those countries paying for that? Those who today claim to be rewarding the Balkan countries are the same ones who, yesterday, were doing all they could to destroy Yugoslavia and dismantle its peoples' achievements. The hands of the major EU and NATO powers are stained with the crimes they committed there, in an operation that succeeded in creating hatred and warfare between peoples that had long before decided to unite their wills in order to build their country. We therefore

do not support the dismantling of what remains of Yugoslavia, promoted by those who want to get their hands on its wealth, exploit its peoples and make use of its geostrategic location, an old dream of big capital in the EU. It is already being announced that the next area to be included in the regime will be Kosovo, the EU-NATO protectorate in the region.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) I and the movement to which I belong totally disagree with Mrs Fajon's proposal to make citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania exempt from a visa requirement when crossing the European Union's external borders. I believe such a measure to be irresponsible and hazardous to the safety of European citizens because it underestimates the political problems and difficulties in those countries, while it overestimates the weak and unsatisfactory progress achieved in recent years. In Albania, no legal system has yet been established to counter organised crime and the very high levels of corruption. The criminal justice system faces similar problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the level of cooperation between the police and legal authorities is very poor. The visa policy allows a certain amount of monitoring and selection of who is allowed to enter from third countries. Without the control provided by this system, we risk situations arising that are hazardous for the safety of our citizens.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) This vote is a strong signal that the European Parliament is sending to Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely, the prospect of future membership of the European Union. Indeed, allowing the abolition of visas for nationals of these two countries will no doubt encourage the mobility of young students and will strengthen economic and political cooperation with the Balkan region, where some countries such as Serbia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are already benefiting from such a regime. However, let us not deceive ourselves; this vote by Parliament does not, under any circumstances, mean an endorsement of the policies of the current Albanian Government for which we are maintaining the requirements already stated in July. This measure is primarily intended to create a link between nations. It is obviously regrettable that Kosovo, because of disagreements between Member States regarding recognition of its independence, is not included in this process under way between the European Union and countries in the Balkans. We must work towards this.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Today, the European Parliament has given a strong sign of its support for the policy of abolishing the visa regime for the countries of the Western Balkans, continuing on the course followed last year, when mandatory visas for nationals of Serbia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were dispensed with. That decision represented important progress towards the European integration of these countries, which have demonstrated that they are capable of embarking on serious reform processes. With today's vote on the Fajon report, we have accepted the Commission's proposal to abolish the mandatory element for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina also. In fact, I believe that a differentiated approach would have risked exacerbating the ethnic and political divisions characteristic of the region. The only region not included in the visa liberalisation process is Kosovo. This exception is substantially due to the existing issues regarding the recognition of that country's independence, which I hope can soon be resolved. In conclusion, I must point out that the abolition of visas, which is the objective of this report, concerns a crucial aspect of people's lives, in that it allows them to actually exercise their right to freedom of movement.

Marine Le Pen (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) A report from Europol, Eurojust and Frontex has estimated that 900 000 illegal immigrants enter the European Union every year. This

document describes the illegal immigrants coming from the Balkans as containing a strong criminal element in terms of drugs, arms and human trafficking.

While some of these countries remain highly unstable for geopolitical, religious or even ethnic reasons, the report from the socialist, Mrs Fajon, recommends nothing less than abolishing the visa system for all countries in the Western Balkans. Quite apart from the fact that this privilege goes against the Schengen agreements and the very principles of the functioning of the European Union and of the mechanism for joining it, to my mind, it is out of the question to authorise the free movement of persons from countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina or Albania.

Invoking this 'fundamental right' is, in reality, only a 'hotch-potch' utopia. The European Union is already dealing with massive and uncontrolled immigration that is severely damaging the identity as well as the economy and society of the nations that make it up. On the contrary, we should lobby for the fundamental right of people to retain control of their borders and to take a sovereign decision on who can or cannot enter their countries.

Mario Mauro (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The Fajon report on the proposal for a regulation listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders of Member States and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement must be viewed positively, inasmuch as it represents an appropriate consequence of the agreements to relax visa requirements that the EU reached with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in 2007. Given the need to continue with systematic controls even after liberalisation, it should be emphasised that this measure will undoubtedly play an important part in creating stability. Furthermore, I agree with the rapporteur that the direct consequences of this phenomenon on the quality of people's lives will help to encourage the state and governmental institutions and the politicians in their efforts to implement the reforms necessary for them to accede to the European Union.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) If we are to consider extending the visa waivers to include citizens from Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, we might discuss the theory whereby Albania has made progress in eradicating the influence of organised crime. This is not the case. However, the rapporteur's explanatory statement and the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, both of which advocate visa liberalisation with Kosovo, are an unacceptable provocation. As a result, I am voting against.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The EU has always been concerned that the citizens within its geographical boundaries should be able to move freely throughout Member States. This facility was gradually extended to non-member countries, and now various citizens of non-EU countries are able to travel within the EU without the need of a visa.

The goal of the current resolution is visa exemption for citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the example set in other countries in the Western Balkans, namely, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The progress made by the two countries in recent months has led the EU to abolish the need for entry visas for their citizens, which will help reduce the risk of greater political and ethnic instability, strengthen political and economic cooperation in the region, increase popular support for the EU and prospects for European integration, broaden the horizons of their populations and restrain extremist and anti-European sentiment: for these reasons, I have voted in favour.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I support the Commission's proposal to abolish the visa regime for the citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The visa regime should not, under any circumstances, isolate the citizens of the Western Balkans or turn them away from the European Union, their nearest neighbour. This decision to liberalise the visa regime is the result of progress made by these two countries, particularly in terms of strengthening the fight against organised crime. It is a decision that will have a major psychological impact on the population, for example, on students, who, up until now, have had to form queues in the consulates.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – (LV) I voted in favour of the final version of Mrs Fajon's report. In this connection, I should like to make it clear that I am opposed to a visa waiver regime for citizens of Kosovo, because I believe that it is necessary to agree this issue with the Serbian side. I fully agree with the position taken by the UN Security Council, which has not recognised the independence of Kosovo. I also believe that until such time as Serbia recognises the independence of Kosovo, we do not have the right to take any steps towards even the indirect recognition of that region. As is known, many EU Member States have not recognised the independence of Kosovo. I am convinced that we must adopt a more considered approach to this issue.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The visa liberalisation in 2009 demonstrated to all intents and purposes that many people in the Balkans equate visa-free travel with being given *carte blanche*. Countless people have used the more liberal visa conditions to travel into the European Union. How many of those people actually went back to their home countries once the period of time granted for their stay had expired, nobody knows. It does not seem to be clear to the people in question that visa liberalisation has nothing to do with jobs or the right of abode. The maths of stemming illegal entry into the EU through a readmission agreement cannot stack up while visa liberalisation continues to be abused. This idea needs to be put paid to. Kosovo, in particular, represents a major problem for us in this regard. The EU has never been able to decide what it thinks more important or what it thinks is correct and proper – territorial integrity or the right of self-determination for peoples – and because we have ignored the problem of multinational states for too long, what we have now is a divided Balkan state. To use a visa agreement in order, indirectly, to almost force recognition of Kosovo in this way, when some Member States have not recognised it, contradicts the principle of subsidiarity and is a violation of national rights, which should be rejected in the strongest possible terms. In light of the above considerations, I voted against the Fajon report.

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this report, because I know very well – as a Romanian citizen – how important freedom of movement is. It is the most important freedom that the European Union is based on and the biggest right a European citizen has. Broadening this principle to Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important step on the way to European integration.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) I fully support the proposal drafted by the European Parliament and the Council concerning the waiving of the requirement for short-term visas for citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina when crossing external borders. The countries mentioned have made great progress in complying with the requirements of the European Union. In accordance with the Commission's proposal, once the visa requirement has been scrapped, the Commission will undertake appropriate monitoring, in these two countries and in all Western Balkan countries which have already left the 'negative list' and been transferred to the 'positive list', of the process whereby the

measures planned by these countries within the framework of the liberalisation of visa regulations are implemented effectively and permanently. The Commission also stresses that the basic requirement for completion of the visa liberalisation process in these countries is the introduction of biometric passports, which will guarantee security and prevent illegal immigration.

Crescenzo Rivellini (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted against a favourable conclusion to the visa liberalisation process for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. I support the critical position that the French took during the COREPER meeting on 29 September: having complained that the period between the Commission's proposal and the assessment was too short, they referred the issue to Parliament and requested more time to evaluate the benchmarks. There are still too many issues unresolved to agree to abolish the requirement for Albanian and Bosnian nationals to possess a visa for entry into the EU. These issues concern, in particular, the fight against corruption and organised crime, the lack of biometric passports, and immigration and border controls. On this last issue, I should remind you that last March, Belgium repatriated several hundred Serbs and Macedonians of Albanian origin who had sought asylum in Europe after visa restrictions had been lifted for Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro in December.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Today's vote clears the way for the belated but very welcome inclusion of Bosnia and Albania in the EU's visa-free travel scheme. It will clearly give a boost to their citizens, giving them the same rights and privileges as their neighbours. The Council should now move swiftly to approve their inclusion. However, we are concerned about the reluctance of some Member States, notably France, to do so. Bosnia's and Albania's compliance with the EU criteria for lifting the visa requirement is actually better now than Serbia's and Macedonia's at the time they got visa-free travel one year ago. If the Council fails to follow the position of the European Parliament and European Commission, it would be a completely wrong signal to send to the citizens of Bosnia and Albania.

Oreste Rossi (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) We are opposed to this report because stipulating that nationals of Albania and of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be exempt from the requirement to possess visas when crossing the external borders of Member States is a risky business. We consider this to be especially true in the case of Albania, where organised crime is deep-seated, and this could then spread throughout the rest of the EU. In spite of this, Mr Frattini has come out in favour of visa relaxation; a decision that is incompatible with that already taken by France, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The former Yugoslav countries of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia were recently added to the positive list of the regulation in question, meaning that their citizens are exempt from needing a visa to be able to enter European Union territory. Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina have also been making progress, so that as soon as they meet the exemption criteria, they can be granted exemption and come off the negative list. It is essential to decide that a future citizen of the Union has a fundamental right to travel in the European Union. In order to put this liberalisation into practice, it is still necessary to strengthen the fight against organised crime in both countries and to develop a strategy supporting the integration of repatriated nationals, in the case of Albania, and the harmonisation of criminal law according to the Federal Criminal Code, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ability to travel without needing visas in the near future will contribute to strengthening political and economic cooperation and

reducing the risk of tensions in the region. Moreover, EU support will certainly help to broaden people's horizons. I am voting for the document for the reasons given above.

- Motion for a resolution: Failures in protection of human rights and justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo (RC-B70524/2010)

Damien Abad (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) In view of the fact that there has been no improvement in the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is, in fact, worsening, and in view of the fact that systematic violations of human rights are being committed on a daily basis, specifically in terms of unlawful executions, abductions, sexual assaults and acts of torture, I think it is essential for me to vote in favour of this resolution carried by the European Parliament. The profits, the economy and mining and land resources are under the control of armed groups and conflicts have been going on for years, despite the presence of the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is therefore essential to ask the DRC Government to regain stability and security in the country and thence to launch the peace process.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) Today in plenary, we adopted by a very large majority a resolution condemning failures in protection of human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). We have thus condemned the violence and, in particular, the mass rape perpetrated in the country over the summer. We must, as a matter of urgency, strengthen the fight against impunity and, above all, end all violations of human rights, regardless of what they may be. Independent investigations must be carried out to bring the guilty to justice. We furthermore deplore the fact that the United Nations peacekeeping forces present on the ground have not been able to halt this violence. Their presence is, nevertheless, essential, and we must allow them to complete their mandate in the DRC.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) The Democratic Republic of Congo must immediately take action to meet its commitments in areas of human rights violations. Today, most armed movements use rape and violence as a means to achieve military and economic objectives. As a consequence of these violent acts, women often lose their place in society, their ability to care for their children, or even their lives. Civilians continue to suffer unbearably and live in poverty. The Democratic Republic of Congo must take all possible measures in order to prevent any further attacks against civilians and to ensure a strengthening of responsibility for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. At the same time, it is important to promote peace and stability in the region by applying existing regional instruments and making more efforts to develop the regional economy. It is very important for the action plan adopted by the Council for gender equality in the field of development cooperation to ensure that the gender equality dimension is taken into account in all policy areas.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The Democratic (?) Republic of Congo provides the setting for a humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding out of our sight, but this does not make it any less heartrending. I hope that the initiative from the European Parliament to issue a declaration strongly condemning all the warring parties in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and to distribute it more widely, including to the UN Secretary-General, will bring about an improvement in the situation of the civil population, who are the real victims of this senseless war. Information about the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is especially alarming as the acts of exceptional brutality being committed are taking place in the vicinity of the UN peacekeeping camp. The

1 244 women raped in just three months of this year by representatives of all the forces involved in this conflict are by no means mere statistics. Each of them is going through their own tragedy. What is even more shocking is that this situation can happen again at any time without them feeling any kind of protection. The situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo provides a further argument in favour of officially acknowledging any form of violence based on gender as a crime against humanity and a war crime.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Despite the efforts headed by the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the extremely difficult work carried out by humanitarian organisations, human rights violations still persist. The situation is alarming, giving rise to massive rape of civilians by members of armed militia, unacceptable suffering, poverty, displacement of people and the degrading situation in the refugee camps, as well as the forced recruitment of civilians and child soldiers.

The Congolese army continues to lack the human, technical and financial resources to carry out its mission. This resolution reinforces the priorities of training and appropriate salaries in order to reform the Congolese army and improve its regiment. In addition, it underscores the need to redouble efforts to put an end to the armed groups' activity, and to hold to account those responsible for human rights violations. Equally, it reinforces the need to develop close cooperation between the DRC Government and the international community, taking into consideration the participation of women in resolving the conflict. Dialogue needs to be resumed immediately for the sake of the peace process, for which reason I have voted in favour of this resolution.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) It is vital to put a stop to the escalation of violence against local communities and acts of mass destruction, such as burning down houses, schools, churches or even whole villages, as has happened in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and children (some 14 cases of rape a day, according to data from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees) have been used as weapons of war. We cannot allow a generalised feeling of impunity to develop with regard to crimes that are, in fact, extremely serious violations of fundamental rights. The perpetrators must be brought to justice and convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity. I reiterate the call made to the United Nations and the Congolese Government to launch investigations. I also hope that the UN Security Council will urgently adopt measures to effectively prevent further attacks on the civilian population and to provide the victims with all the assistance they require. I welcome the adoption of the 'Conflict Minerals' law in the United States and hope that the EU can initiate similar legislation.

Corina Crețu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) I have followed with concern and disquiet the situation unfolding in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the abuses perpetrated against civilians, especially against women, and the use of rape as a weapon in the clashes between the various military groups involved in a proper civil war. I got involved in drafting this European Parliament resolution on failures in protection of human rights and justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo based on a desire to find a way of making those responsible for these actions respect civil rights and freedoms, as well as human dignity and the international commitments to which the country is party.

I welcome the initiative launched by the US, where the law on 'conflict minerals' was recently adopted, and the natural request from the proposers of this resolution who are asking the Commission and Council to consider a similar legislative initiative as an

additional instrument to be used to influence the decisions of those responsible for such reprehensible and barbaric acts. I therefore voted in favour of adopting this resolution.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) We must urgently find a political solution to the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) so that safety and stability can at last be brought to the population of eastern Congo. This is the purpose of the resolution that the European Parliament has adopted today following the publication of the report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on 1 October, which lists 617 of the most serious violations of human rights and humanitarian international law committed during a 10-year period by State and non-State players in the DRC. Tens of thousands of people were killed and many others were raped, mutilated or suffered other forms of violence during the decade in question. The European Union is willing to support all the efforts made by the DRC Government and by countries in the Great Lakes region to promote together peace and stability in the area, by emphasising reconciliation, personal safety, a reformed and enhanced judiciary and the return and integration of refugees and displaced persons within the country.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution as I condemn the violence against women and children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There is an urgent need to step up the fight against impunity and to put an immediate end to the violence and human rights violations in that country.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Democratic Republic of Congo has experienced profound instability arising from the artificial nature of its borders and internal animosities. The proliferation of warring movements and the atrocities they have committed make up some of the saddest pages in the history of Africa. The list of tragedies and violations of human rights and justice is being added to so fast that even the best-informed observers cannot keep up properly. The international community was recently alerted to a wave of mass rapes, which we can only find repugnant and which deserve our condemnation and the strongest repudiation. The use of this type of violence as a weapon of war – which, unfortunately, is nothing new – must, even so, elicit from us nothing less than unreserved condemnation and the effective prosecution of those who are physically and morally responsible for it. Congo needs peace and stability, but that will not be achieved unless the perpetrators of the most obscene breaches of human rights, who have been enjoying scandalous impunity, are unequivocally identified and punished as an example to others.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Atul Khare, the UN Under-Secretary General responsible for peacekeeping operations, informed the United Nations Security Council that from 30 July to 4 August, over 500 people were victims of gang rape perpetrated in the North Kivu province by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Hutu rebel group, and by the Mai Mai militia.

I strongly condemn this gang rape, as well as other human rights violations, and I welcome the request made to the United Nations and the DRC Government that it undertake an impartial and thorough investigation of all incidents, and guarantee that those responsible for violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law be held to account for their actions and prosecuted under the terms of international law.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We firmly condemn the rapes of women and children and all the human rights violations perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It will only be possible to put an end to such acts when the foreign military presence and external interference in the country are terminated, as these are factors that

feed the conflict. The UN and EU missions have already demonstrated that they are not the solution but part of the problem. Our political group proposed calling for 'an end to the EUPOL and EUSEC missions to the DRC, which have admittedly made a negative contribution to escalating violence and the situation in the country by training security forces that have been perpetrating crimes against their own civilian population'.

A majority in this House preferred to reject this proposal and sided with those who want to maintain the conflict and benefit from it. Peace will only be achieved through a political agreement between the various stakeholders, both inside and outside the country. It must, of course, include the countries in the region, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, which are breaching the sovereignty and independence of the DRC and playing an active part in the conflict. Above all, however, it must involve the United States and the European Union, the main beneficiaries of a war economy which sustains itself by selling important minerals used by US and European companies in the production of computer and mobile telephone components.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The serious human rights violations, including systematic and mass rapes, which have taken place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, are truly shocking. Whilst this House's powers are limited in this area, it is important that we are united in condemning these atrocities and accordingly, I supported today's resolution.

Sabine Lösing (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (DE) I condemn the mass rapes and serious violations of human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the strongest possible terms. I very much welcome the inclusion and adoption of this condemnation in the joint motion for a resolution. I voted against the joint motion for a resolution, however, because, to a large extent, Congolese military and police units trained by the EU's EUPOL and EUSEC missions since 2005 were, and are, also involved in these crimes. The joint motion for a resolution expressly supports and welcomes these training missions. I am in favour of the immediate cessation of these missions, as they have contributed in a negative way to the escalation of violence and to the situation in the country by training security forces that have been repeatedly involved in the serious violations of the human rights of the Congolese people. In addition, the army and police trained by the EU support the repressive apparatus of the corrupt Kabila regime.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The EU cannot remain untouched by the various armed conflicts which occur occasionally around the world. The violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been dragging on for several years and has caused the death, displacement or homelessness of millions of people.

It is therefore extremely important to exhort all those involved in this conflict to cease hostilities so that the population of these regions can return to living in peace. It is very important that we continue to support the United Nations missions on the ground so as to mitigate the suffering of the whole population, particularly focusing on the elderly, women and children.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), in writing. – (LV) Quite recently, more than 500 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo fell victim to a mass gang rape. The members of various armed bands in the eastern DRC are culpable of this mass rape. I fully support this resolution of the European Parliament. At the same time, I should like to add that, bearing in mind that the UN peacekeepers' camp was situated quite close to the town in which these onslaughts of a sexual nature took place, and yet the UN did not prevent this shocking incident, we must form a view of the UN base's actions in the eastern DRC. We must identify

the names of the responsible UN commanders. One would also like to know whether the officers and troops of the UN base know the reason why they have been posted there. It seems to me that they do not know, and that it is by dint of their silence that this mass crime and mockery of international law was committed. It is a crime on the UN's part to fail to carry out its direct mission.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) There are no words to describe the violent atrocities that continue to take place in the Democratic Republic of Congo. All we can do is describe them, one by one. Gang rape, mutilation, gratuitous violence, looting, sordid murders, not to mention the mockery made every day of the most fundamental freedoms, in a State that is in full decline. We can add impunity to the absence of any action or reaction, the result of a non-existent justice system, as well as Congolese authorities who resign rather than face up to the essential duty of protecting their citizens. This resolution, the third of its kind, is aimed at the head of the Congolese authorities, but also at the European and international authorities who can no longer refuse to get involved. They have a duty to act and protect the people, namely via the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) which is present on the ground. They must facilitate the re-establishment of peace and stability in the region and contribute to the establishment of a State that can exercise its core functions fully and finally be able to ensure respect for the rule of law.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I hope the main actors in the field will take note of what we have just voted. We strongly condemn the mass rape and other human rights violations which took place between 30 July and 4 August on at least 500 women and children in North Kivu province by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Hutu rebel group, and the Mai Mai militia, as well as those in other regions of North and South Kivu. We call on all actors to step up the fight against impunity and for an immediate end to the violence and human rights abuses in the DRC, particularly in North Kivu. We stress the need for further efforts to put an end to the activity of local and foreign armed groups in the east of the DRC. We also call on the UN and the DRC Government to conduct an impartial and thorough investigation of the events, to ensure that those responsible for breaching human rights and international humanitarian law are held responsible and prosecuted in conformity with Congolese and international law.

Oreste Rossi (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) Unfortunately, many countries in the world have no respect for fundamental human rights. On the contrary, they are guilty of crimes against humanity, wars, sexual violence, and violence of every other type against men, women and children. Between July and August, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the mining district of eastern Congo alone, more than 500 people, including children, girls, and women as old as 75, were victims of gang rapes. All this took place in the vicinity of a UN camp. Not only did the UN not intervene, it even pretended not to be aware of what had happened for weeks. According to internal estimates, about 6 million people have died so far. I can only wholeheartedly support this resolution, which sees Parliament taking the side of the weakest and most defenceless.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) I supported the resolution on failures in protection of human rights and justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I believe that it should be adopted urgently and as a matter of priority. At the beginning of December, there will be an ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Kinshasa. This resolution could send an important message to the authorities and inhabitants of the Congo. It will be a signal that the European Union intends to intensify its efforts to stabilise the situation in

this region, to verify the aid mechanisms currently in place, to place more stress on judicial reforms and, above all, to stand firmly against violence against women and children and to put to an end to the impunity of those responsible.

Marc Tarabella (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I am very pleased with the adoption of the resolution on failures in protection of human rights and justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This resolution sheds light on and condemns the numerous violations perpetrated as a weapon of war against Congolese women. These atrocities have long been ravaging the country. Once again, I stress the need to fight against the impunity that reigns in this region and I ask the Commission to prepare a legislative initiative at the earliest possible juncture which follows on from the American law on ‘conflict minerals’.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) Ladies and gentlemen, I am very concerned about events in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where hundreds if not thousands of women and children have been raped in the last few months. As a politician, I am stunned, even more so as a father and a man. It is terrible. Those guilty must be found, prosecuted and punished in accordance with international law. We, the international community, have failed. However, we also failed much closer to home, in our own territory. We always rush to condemn human rights violations outside the European Union and demand that urgent action be taken. However, when attention turns to human rights violations within the EU, the reaction is mostly restrained. The EU will be hit by a huge crisis of confidence if it fails to narrow the gap between its honourable condemnations of crimes committed outside the EU and actions being taken at home in the area of human rights. It should not be this way. The Treaty of Lisbon brought new opportunities to strengthen human rights, especially the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which is now mandatory, not just for EU institutions, but also for Member States. Thus, it is within our capabilities to fix this human rights vacuum within the EU, but we must act now.

Anna Záborská (PPE), *in writing*. – (SK) Ladies and gentlemen, between 30 July and 4 August 2010, massive human rights violations and sexual violence against children, women and also men took place in the eastern part of the Congo. The violation of human rights and of international law continues to this very day, and is spreading across the region at an alarming rate. The European Union has taken on a long-term commitment towards the entire African region of the Great Lakes, part of which lies within the Democratic Republic of Congo. Our efforts towards peace and stability in the region, however, have so far brought no tangible results. Our resolution of today is another appeal by this Parliament to end attacks on civilian populations in the eastern provinces of Congo, and for the victims to be provided with basic health, social, humanitarian and legal assistance. Every armed conflict has a political solution, but there has to be a will to find such a solution. The security and stability of eastern Congo therefore rests primarily on the shoulders of the Congolese Government. Economic and humanitarian assistance is important, but it is not enough in itself. I am pleased that this Parliament, through the vote of its Members, has again confirmed in clear terms that our commitment to Congo includes a clear statement on the defence of human rights every time they are violated in the region. I have therefore supported the submitted resolution, and I trust that the European Commission will find effective mechanisms for putting the recommendations from the resolution into practice.

- Motion for a resolution: World day against the death penalty (RC-B7-0541/2010)

Roberta Angelilli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) In recent weeks, the European Parliament and the entire international community have mobilised themselves in defence of Sakineh, but

also in defence of all the men and women who live under the same conditions in Iran and, indeed, in every other part of the world in which fundamental rights continue to be violated. As of today, there are 154 countries in the world that have abolished the death penalty. Ninety-six of these have abolished it for all offences; eight have retained it solely for exceptional crimes, such as those committed in wartime; six have declared a moratorium on executions; and 44 have *de facto* abolished it, that is to say, these are countries in which no executions have been recorded for at least 10 years or which have made a binding commitment not to apply the death penalty. In many countries, no distinction is made between people who have been convicted; in fact, in a small number of countries, child criminals are still executed. All this is in flagrant violation of international law, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Accordingly, I reaffirm my opposition to the death penalty, in every case and in all circumstances, in the hope that it will be abolished as soon as possible.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) In recent years, promising progress has been made towards the abolition of capital punishment. The number of countries which have stopped using this form of punishment for good has risen to 95. In fact, its regular use has been restricted to two regions in the world: Asia and North Africa. The UN resolutions on the implementation of a global moratorium have made a considerable contribution to achieving these results. The EU also continues to provide the largest source of funding to organisations campaigning against capital punishment. However, I believe that the specific initiatives promoted by these organisations must gain the necessary political support. As the European Parliament's motion for a resolution provides significant support in this respect, I voted in favour of it. However, in spite of the positive progress, 58 countries retain the death penalty, while the statistics for the number of people condemned to this punishment are alarming. Last year, more than 700 people were executed, which is not counting the several thousand people assumed to have been condemned to death in China. I therefore would like to highlight the need to increase efforts in influencing international public opinion. Even in some EU Member States, a large proportion of citizens would agree to the introduction of capital punishment.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) On the occasion of the World day against the death penalty, which will take place on 10 October for the eighth consecutive year, we, as MEPs, would like to adopt a resolution to underline our commitment to abolishing capital punishment and our wish to see this principle of opposition to the death penalty adopted worldwide. Although 43 countries around the world continue to use capital punishment, this resolution invites the Member States that continue to use it to declare a moratorium on executions. The aim is to achieve complete worldwide abolition, which is one of the priorities of the Union's human rights policy.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) There are many countries in the world that still apply the death penalty, including all those that have concluded commercial and economic agreements with Europe that contain so-called human rights clauses. When thinking of countries where public executions are carried out by hanging, stoning or through the use of methods tantamount to torture, we must be moved by the hope that texts such as the one on which we have voted today will act as a spur to the whole of Europe, which too often forgets its economic and political power, and refrains from exercising it in the international arena in order to promote respect for human dignity in third countries.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) The death penalty is one of the oldest penalties imposed for very serious crimes which has yet to be abolished in certain countries. The

death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhumane and degrading punishment, which violates the right to life as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At present, 43 countries worldwide still retain the death penalty. Therefore, the European Parliament immediately calls on countries to take swift action to end this practice. The imposition of the death penalty on minors and on persons with mental or intellectual disability causes particular concern. The imposition of this penalty on the most vulnerable people should be abolished as soon as possible. It is very important for countries' government institutions to undertake to monitor issues surrounding the death penalty so that specific cases are raised with the national authorities and possible initiatives for the abolition of the death penalty are considered.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The European Union is committed to one of its priority human rights objectives – the complete abolition of the death penalty worldwide – a fact which will be confirmed by the declaration adopted by the European Union's legislative plenary on World day against the death penalty. The fact that many states still apply the death penalty, the cruellest, most inhumane and degrading form of punishment of all, especially to women and even minors, is beyond comprehension. What makes it all the more difficult to understand is that there is no kind of evidence to show that the death penalty discourages crimes more than other forms of punishment. It is important for the European Union to continue its measures supporting cooperation between states because this is the only way, through collaboration, education and raising awareness, of enabling us to fulfil the desire to abolish the death penalty worldwide. The key to achieving the European Union's most desired human rights objective also lies in the activities of the non-governmental sector which highlights unfair trials that scandalously impose harsh sentences, like the one handed down in Iran to a boy who was only 16 at the time he committed his alleged crime.

David Campbell Bannerman and Nigel Farage (EFD), in writing. – UKIP accepts there are legitimate arguments about the death penalty, both for and against. However, UKIP feels that the decision to have or not have the death penalty is a decision that lies only with the individual nation state, and not the undemocratic EU. UKIP notes the attempts the EU has made to interfere with other countries' policies in this area. It is not for the EU to bully any country into maintaining abolition or enacting abolition of the death penalty. UKIP also notes the way the EU has shut down any debate on this topic in the European context, despite public opinion on the subject. The maintenance or otherwise of the death penalty is, and should remain, a decision solely made at the nation state level via democratic means. Any state with the death penalty should ensure proper procedures of evidence collection, prisoner interrogation and fair trials.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) In a world where 43 countries still maintain the death penalty, and where children are forced to watch public executions, Europe must continue to call for an end to this practice, which constitutes a cruel and unacceptable violation of the right to life. I voted for this resolution because I feel the EU should use diplomatic instruments to contribute to the abolition of the death penalty, applying pressure on government authorities to impose a moratorium on capital punishment, with a view to its complete abolition. The resolution urges the Council and the Commission to provide guidelines for an overall European policy to apply to the dozens of European citizens condemned to suffer the death penalty in third countries, and make information and legal assistance available, which I consider equally important. I also

recognise the importance of approving World day against the death penalty and European day against the death penalty.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The value of life and the multiple cases of judicial error that history has left us are more than enough reason for us to fight the death penalty. Abolition of the death penalty throughout the world is one of the European Union's priorities. The European day against the death penalty has been established on 10 October each year. We are strongly committed to working towards the abolition of the death penalty everywhere and are striving to achieve universal acceptance of this principle. According to Amnesty International, there are still 58 countries in the world that have not abolished it, 18 of which carried out executions in 2009. China alone executed more people than all the other countries put together. The only country in Europe that continues to apply the death penalty is Belarus. The European Parliament was the first European institution to launch this campaign, in the early 1980s, and the EU is currently the main institutional actor in the fight against the death penalty, as well as the main source of funding for such efforts. We must fight for the adoption of moratoria on executions until the death penalty is finally eradicated.

Corina Crețu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) One of the first measures adopted by the temporary authorities in Bucharest after the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime, in the wake of the popular uprisings in Timișoara and Bucharest, was to abolish the death penalty. This was a gesture of healing, primarily to the political victims of the totalitarian regimes which dominated Romania from the 1930s. I am recalling this event in recent European history because the European Parliament's resolution on the World day against the death penalty is a response to an outmoded practice in the 21st century. The death penalty is still part of the legislation in many countries, including some which actively promote civil rights and freedoms globally.

The death penalty does not only not act as a deterrent and reduce the level of crime, but it also raises the very real issue of possible miscarriages of justice, which would send innocent people to their death. I regard the invitation from the European Union's Member States to the countries which still use this punishment, calling on them to adopt a moratorium on carrying out the sentences, as one of the main plus points of this resolution. This made me decide to vote in favour of its adoption.

George Sabin Cutaș (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) This year, 12 countries applied capital punishment, in spite of the condemnation levelled against this inhumane punishment by most countries in the world and international institutions, including the United Nations. I believe that the pressure being exerted to abolish the death penalty in the 43 countries which still include it in their national legislations must become a priority in the European Union's policy for promoting human rights and, in particular, as part of the work of the new European External Action Service.

Mário David (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) As a citizen of Portugal, one of the first countries in the world to abolish the death penalty in 1867, I consider the death penalty to be inhuman and the most extreme denial of human rights. It is therefore with satisfaction that I am voting in favour of this resolution's motion. The promotion of human dignity and the consequential fight for the abolition of the death penalty are, and must remain, among the goals of the European Union human rights policy. For the sake of a global and effective European policy over the death penalty, the EU, through its institutions and, in particular through the High Representative, should speak with one voice. The establishment of a

global moratorium on the use and imposition of the death penalty in every region of the world is not only a fundamental step on the road to abolishing the death penalty throughout the world. It is, above all, a vital step towards greater respect for humanity.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The eighth World day against the death penalty, on 10 October 2010, is a chance for the European Parliament to reiterate that abolition of the death penalty all over the world remains a priority for the European Union, at a time when it is still practised in 18 countries. In 2009, more than 700 people were executed, without counting the thousands of executions that took place in China. Executions or death sentences have never resulted in improved crime figures, which is why the European Union should promote alternative sentences at the disposal of criminal justice systems when dealing with countries that still apply this punishment, which is contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Parliament has also expressed deep concern about the application of the death penalty to minors and to people suffering from mental or intellectual impairment and has called for it to be brought to an end swiftly and permanently.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution because it advocates that the European Union should use all tools of diplomacy and cooperation assistance available to it to work towards the abolition of the death penalty. Portugal is an example to be copied in this respect, because it was the first European country to include the abolition of the death sentence in its constitution, over 140 years ago. Unfortunately, that is not the case in more than 40 countries around the world, where violations of the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights still persist.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The death penalty is an unacceptable violation of the intrinsic dignity of every human being, and of the inalienable and unrepeatable value of every life. It therefore deserves our vehement condemnation and everyone's unreserved commitment to its eradication I hope that more countries will join the group of states that have abandoned this practice forever. Irrespective of the seriousness of the specific individual actions which, in theory, might motivate or even justify such a sentence, I believe that the abolition of the death penalty represents an enormous step forward for civilisation and a distinctive feature of penal systems, such as those of the Union's Member States, that seek to separate justice from revenge. It is essential to maintain this non-vindictive provision and to ensure that even the worst of criminals must be treated with dignity, even if they do not deserve it. Indeed, simply taking an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth would be unworthy of our common heritage of respect for human life, which is so often overlooked by our political decision makers. At this time, my thoughts are also with all those who are not guaranteed even a semblance of a fair trial and who are killed randomly or deliberately by the most barbaric methods in the most merciless circumstances.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) The eighth World day against the death penalty will be held on 10 October. I welcome this European Parliament resolution because I consider it to be the correct next step following the recent resolutions on the death penalty in China, Nigeria, North Korea and Iran. The extent of capital punishment throughout the world is a cause for concern and it is difficult to establish the true levels of this phenomenon, particularly in the above countries, where democracy is absent or greatly limited. It is important for the European Union to take up a strong position on this matter and use every possible legal instrument and political instrument in general to draw international attention to the matter and denounce infringements of international law. For these reasons, I will vote in favour of the motion for a resolution.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Whilst the EU is a global leader in the campaign against the death penalty, too many countries, including many with whom we have strong economic, social and cultural links, continue to execute people. I do not consider that capital punishment has any place in the 21st century and support today's call for a moratorium on executions.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – The abolition of the death penalty worldwide is a priority of this Parliament and a particular priority of the Socialists and Democrats Group. It is a violation of human rights and unacceptable in all circumstances, and I am pleased Parliament has endorsed this motion with such great support. As the most active and prominent supporter of abolition in the world, the EU had a responsibility to support civil society and organisations throughout the world campaigning for such a fundamental human right. There is a great amount of work to be done in supporting de facto abolitionist countries codifying such practice in law, in reducing the number of death penalty sentences handed down and carried out in other countries, and in supporting campaigns to repeal death sentences, particularly where trial outcomes are not recognised as legally sound. This is a fundamental value of our Union which we must defend publicly and often wherever possible.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The World day against the death penalty, declared for 10 October, is a further demonstration of Europe's guiding role in the battle for civilisation. The resolution deserves to be adopted, since it highlights the innumerable problems and aberrations that still exist today in 43 countries in the world. It rightly emphasises that the battles we have fought thus far have led to tangible results: the several international conventions in this regard have been ratified by an ever increasing number of countries. This means that increasing attention is being paid to human rights at international level. Finally, I support the request for the High Representative, Baroness Ashton, to keep in mind that the main political content of the resolution must be the adoption of a worldwide moratorium as a crucial step towards the abolition of the death penalty.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Over recent years, the EU has been the main institutional player in the fight against the death penalty. This fight has been a priority of its foreign policy related to human rights. The truth is that there are still over 40 countries in the world which exercise the death penalty. As one of these countries, Belarus, is in Europe, we feel it necessary to make every effort to achieve the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world, given that it is the most cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and violates the right to life set down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is the reason for my vote.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I have upheld this resolution because my conscience as a human being leads me to fight for the abolition of the death penalty. It is a fight fought by all humanists. By abolishing the death penalty, we will strengthen human dignity and make progress on human rights issues. Nothing justifies relativising the value of human life. To this end, I would like to remind you that Europe, an area of democracy, was the pioneer in this fight for abolition of the death penalty. It is therefore Europe's duty to prioritise this legitimate fight.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – (LV) I supported this resolution, as I consider the death penalty to be a light punishment for those who have carried out serious inhumane crimes. I am not convinced that Latvia, as an EU Member State, will implement this

resolution, as there has been a prior negative experience. The Republic of Latvia has still not implemented Paragraph 74 of the European Parliament resolution of 11 March 2004 on the situation of non-citizens in Latvia. More than 330 000 people in Latvia remain without status. This means that one of the EU Member States pays scant regard to the opinion of the European Parliament and to the European Union as a whole. For their part, the European Commission and the European Parliament behave as if everything were fine. A strange attitude ... This is evidence that double standards apply in the European Union. The European Union expresses its concern at the violation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, yet violations of human rights on EU territory seem to it to be a normal state of affairs.

Gay Mitchell (PPE), *in writing*. – On behalf of the Irish delegation to the EPP, We support the abolition of the death penalty and voted for the resolution on the World day against the death penalty. However, we voted against the amendments to the text as we see this as a crude instrument, too widely drawn, which would have no effect on the death penalty and could contribute to a lot of people losing their lives because of the illegal drug trade.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) The death penalty is the most inhuman and savage punishment. It constitutes the violation of the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life. This is why I believe that abolishing the death penalty must be one of the European Union's priorities in order to foster democracy and human rights worldwide. In Europe, the ban on the death penalty has a strong footing, since it is guaranteed under Protocols 6 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Union is completely opposed to application of the death penalty, regardless of the circumstances. The actions of the EU in this field form the chief priority of its external human rights policy. The EU has consistently called for abolition of this penalty all over the world, and this is why, to the greatest extent possible, it provides financial support for civil society organisations acting to abolish the death penalty. Since 1994, within the framework of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, over EUR 15 million have been allocated in support of this type of project.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The time that we dedicate to various social causes always constitutes a chance to reflect on the debate surrounding an important issue and, above all, to repeatedly draw attention to impending behavioural changes in the light of the adoption of new values or a new interpretation of old values, which are determining factors in constructing the society in which we wish to live.

The death penalty is one of the most heinous legalised acts, and I consider it to be unjustifiable by any form of prior action. Even murder does not justify the death penalty for homicide, which is the equivalent of punishing one reprehensible act with an identical act which, decreed by a court order, is legal from the judicial viewpoint, but not legitimate from the ethical point of view.

In this context, I wholeheartedly welcome the resolution for the establishment of a World day against the death penalty in the hope that this may constitute a further step toward its effective abolition throughout the world.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Once again, the EP reiterates its long-standing opposition to the death penalty in all cases and under all circumstances and emphasises, once again, that abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights. It condemns all executions wherever they take place and strongly calls on the EU and its Member States to

enforce the implementation of the UN resolution on a universal moratorium on executions with a view to total abolition in all states which still practise the death penalty. It calls on the Council and the Commission to take action in order to progressively restrict its use while insisting that it be carried out according to international minimum standards. It expresses its deep concern regarding the imposition of the death penalty on minors and on persons with mental or intellectual disability and calls for their immediate and definitive ending.

Charles Tannock (ECR), *in writing*. – The British Conservative delegation has traditionally given a free vote to all its Members on the issue of the death penalty. We believe that the use of the death penalty should be a matter of conscience for each individual.

However, we would like to stress that even when individual Members are in support of the death penalty, we believe that it should be reserved for only the most heinous of capital crimes, and we categorically condemn its use on minors.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing*. – Passing this resolution today, ahead of the eighth World day against the death penalty on Sunday, once again relays the European Parliament's call for a complete moratorium on all executions to those countries still using this barbaric form of punishment. It also reinforces the European Parliament's view that all European citizens should be free from the threat of execution.

- Motion for a resolution: EU action on oil exploration and extraction in Europe (B7-0540/2010)

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The oil slick caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico last spring has led to this resolution drafted by the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, which aims to draw attention to the urgent issue of preventing oil slicks. I have therefore voted in favour of this resolution as it is essential that we lay down strict European rules for preventing accidents on oil platforms and for the Union to strengthen legislation on environmental responsibility. However, I deplore the fact that the reference to a moratorium on all new oil drilling as well as to new standards have not been implemented throughout the Union and have been thrown out by a majority of Members in today's vote. The introduction of a moratorium would, in fact, have been in agreement with the policy of prevention and the strengthening of security measures for oil platforms, and would have been in line with Barack Obama's policy of implementing a similar moratorium in the United States until December 2010.

Vito Bonsignore (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The recent disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, which has caused millions of barrels of oil to be discharged into the sea, has drawn the world's attention to a subject that is fundamental for the European Union. This event has shown that strict environmental protection measures must be adhered to when oil is extracted from the deep sea. Europe must, however, remain competitive in this sector and continue prospecting for gas so that it can diversify its energy sources. I therefore support the adoption of new safety principles, the application of strict and rigorous common standards and the establishment of solidarity funds to compensate victims for any damage caused. The urgent need for such measures is also a result of the geomorphological nature of our seas, such as the Mediterranean, and of the drilling currently under way on the Libyan and Egyptian coasts. If there were an oil spill, it would cause an environmental disaster that we would struggle to overcome, with extremely serious consequences for the economy and the environment of many European countries. In conclusion, I do not support the proposal

for a moratorium, because I believe that agreements with third countries and their oil companies would be more effective. This course of action would make it easier to export safety standards and invest in prevention and technological research.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) It is important for the EU to ensure the protection of its coasts through its ability to prevent and respond to such problems. The legislation in effect also needs to reinforce the level of safety in oil exploration and drilling. The European Maritime Safety Agency, located in Lisbon, provides support and technical assistance to the European Commission and Member States for the development and application of Community legislation pertaining to maritime safety and protection, as well as regarding pollution caused by ships.

In June this year, I presented in writing to Commissioners Oettinger, Kallas and Georgieva a suggestion for broadening the European Maritime Agency's area of responsibility and the establishment of safety control mechanisms for European oil platforms located in the North Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and also a suggestion that it take responsibility for the prevention of environmental disasters related to oil drilling. This suggestion allows an economy of scale in terms of financial, human and technical resources. I welcome the Commissioners' response, which demonstrated a willingness to review the regulation of the European Maritime Agency, and I call for the European Commission to develop the efforts needed to achieve this goal.

Corina Crețu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) The recent accident in the Gulf of Mexico, resulting from an explosion on an offshore oil production rig, would be sufficient argument alone for all those due to consider and vote on the European Parliament resolution on EU action on oil exploration and extraction in Europe. As is emphasised in the text of the resolution, Europe is not protected either against such incidents with a devastating environmental impact because the majority of oil drilling and extraction activities take place in the North Sea. We also now have such activities expanding in the Black Sea region, a sea which similarly has its fair share of problems due to human activity. As stipulated in the resolution, it is the Commission's task to devise stringent policies which can be enforced at EU level to prevent oil rig accidents, which may mark an important step towards preventing possible incidents and accidents. These are a few of the considerations justifying my vote in favour of approving this resolution.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The EU must learn the lessons of the Deepwater Horizon rig disaster and ensure that high security standards are adhered to in all oil exploration sites on the seabed. In view of the risks of offshore drilling and the doubts concerning the handling and the potential consequences of such an incident in Europe, the resolution that we have supported asks for 'a moratorium on all new deep sea oil drilling in EU waters'. We are also asking the Commission to carry out a specific assessment and to work on an action plan, in collaboration with the Member States, for improving security standards on existing rigs. Finally, we want to have an assurance that the polluters will be held legally responsible, and that the victims, such as fishermen, will be able to receive the correct compensation.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution on EU action on oil exploration and extraction in Europe, since I consider it necessary to enhance safety and working conditions on offshore oil platforms in the European Union with a view to preventing environmental disasters such as the one that occurred in the Gulf of Mexico.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Given the importance of oil extraction for those countries that perform it and the dangers it involves (as can be seen from the terrible consequences of accidental oil spills), it is essential for the Union to create the conditions to make oil exploration as safe as possible. There has to be appropriate legislation for this purpose, laying down basic safety standards for offshore oil and gas production so as to guarantee the safety of extraction and supply in the European Union. In this respect, as I am Portuguese, I am bound to remember the *Prestige* disaster, which had a profound effect on the Galician coastline with consequences stretching along the coasts of Portugal and France. I therefore call for the measures now being proposed not to be confined just to oil prospection and extraction but to include oil transport and supply as well. Tanker accidents are, unfortunately, more common than we would like, so it is important to review safety standards in this area too, so as to reduce the likelihood of such disasters.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has been a wake-up call for the European Union and its Member States to examine all aspects of oil exploration and extraction in the EU as a matter of urgency, and to take all necessary measures to ensure that this kind of environmental disaster never occurs within our waters. It is therefore necessary and imperative to adopt a common, cross-border European system of prevention and response to oil spills.

I would like to highlight the request for the Commission to submit a report assessing the level of environmental pollution and the biological state of the Gulf of Mexico, along with revising the EU's capacity to respond immediately to accidents involving offshore installations, and to develop a European action plan in cooperation with the Member States. I welcome the request for draft legislation aimed at ensuring the implementation of greater safety standards on all EU oil platforms and drilling operations. However, I disagree with the imposition of a moratorium on any new deep sea oil drilling in EU waters, even if these standards are ensured throughout the EU, due to the disproportionate nature of this measure compared with the impact that it could have on the industry.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The general thrust of the resolution is positive, in that it draws attention to the need for prevention and provision of the necessary support in the event of environmental disasters due to oil spills. Guaranteeing the independence and quality of environmental impact assessments and determining liability are important factors in ensuring a high level of protection for human and environmental health, preventing potentially hazardous activities on the seabed from damaging the marine and coastal environments, protecting biodiversity, and safeguarding the prosperity of local farming and fishing activities for coastal communities. We have to criticise the fact, however, that a resolution on this subject should completely ignore the issues of the physical limits of oil reserves, humanity's extreme and worrying dependence on this primary energy source, the need for fair and careful management of existing reserves, and the need to seek other, alternative sources of energy supply.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) The highest levels of precaution, environmental protection and of safety and security of oil operations in Europe are principles of paramount importance on which we can accept no compromise. In particular, we have to draw the necessary conclusions from the catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico in order to prevent similar events from occurring in European Union maritime and coastal waters.

Nonetheless, Parliament showed good sense today in rejecting the maximalist position calling for a moratorium on all new deep sea oil drilling in European waters. What is at stake is the survival and future of our European oil industry at a time of crisis, but also our need for energy independence.

Alan Kelly (S&D), in writing. – This draft resolution calls for the strengthening of safety and security standards on EU oil platforms and an EU capacity disaster response in the event of an oil spill in EU waters. This is of pressing concern considering the recent disaster in the Gulf of Mexico with the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill. This resolution would call for a moratorium on new deep sea drilling until the standards have been improved and met. I firmly believe that drilling companies throughout Europe need to improve working conditions and a way that this can be done is securing a uniformly high security standard on offshore platforms operating across the EU.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), in writing. – (IT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution because I believe it is essential to examine carefully all aspects connected with oil extraction and exploration in the European Union. In fact, I believe it necessary to enact regulatory measures that will prevent a repeat in our seas of the environmental disasters that have recently struck the United States. In actual fact, if ever similar incidents were to occur in the Mediterranean Sea, which is well known for its extremely slow replacement of water, an environmental disaster with serious consequences would ensue. In the light of the review of existing European legislation in this area, which turns out to be lacking in many respects, it is vital to take action to ensure maximum safety standards. It is for this reason that I join in the call to the Commission to monitor closely the investigations carried out by the US authorities in order to better define and implement high-level precautionary measures which would also ensure the protection of biodiversity in the coastal and marine environment.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted for this resolution as I believe that Europe urgently needs a common European, cross-border oil spill prevention and response system. Given that EU waters also border countries that are not part of the European Union, whereby EU legislation does not require them to comply with the relevant provisions governing liability and the remedying of damage, the European Commission must develop accident prevention policies for oil rigs and extend the scope of the SEVESO II Directive to oil rigs. The current environmental liability legislation contains several important gaps and, therefore, I believe that some new legislative provisions need to be introduced to take into account all inherent risks associated with off-shore exploitation, and liability in the event of oil accidents needs to be properly regulated. Due to the absence of a compensation fund for oil disasters, the Commission must include compulsory financial security provisions under the Environmental Liability Directive.

David Martin (S&D), in writing. – I strongly support high safety standards in oil drilling throughout the EU, and particularly support calls for oil companies to maintain uniformly high standards in all countries they operate in – the current disparities between Member States are unacceptable and unfair. The findings of the investigation into the Deepwater Horizon tragedy must be examined carefully once they are published, and particular care must be taken in reviewing safety standards when awarding licences for new drilling. Given the high standards in North Sea oil drilling in Scotland, I do not think a uniform moratorium on new drilling is the best way to tackle this issue, but instead that detailed safety checks should be paramount in any decision to award new licences.

Barbara Matera (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The close connection between oil exploration and extraction activities and past and future environmental change is proven and is the object of continuous scientific research. An early demonstration of what will happen in 2080 as a result of these activities can only serve as a warning to stop the clock of disasters that is set for the whole world – no one is exempted, not even ourselves. There is no doubt that there are liabilities for deep sea drilling which, until recently, would never have been taken into account, but the threat of disasters similar to that in the Gulf of Mexico cannot leave us indifferent. It is essential today for the European Union to strengthen and harmonise throughout the 27 Member States safety levels pertaining to oil exploration and extraction activities, not only for existing platforms, but also for those that will be taken out of service. Secondly, we must identify and regulate operator liability, beginning with excluding the possibility of leasing installations to third parties. For this reason, I agree with what the rapporteur has stated and I want direct intervention by the Commission and the Council to bring about clarity, transparency, uniformity and, hence, safety within our territory and on this specific subject, on which, ladies and gentlemen, we must never drop our guard.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) I abstain, given that this document does not make a single reference to a post-petrol future.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The various accidents that have taken place in the field of oil exploration and extraction over the years have acted as a warning to the dangers of this activity. However, the recent and extremely serious accident in the Gulf of Mexico has really highlighted the need to use new and different methods to avoid similar situations in future, as these can jeopardise the environmental balance and biodiversity of whole regions, and the resulting damage has an effect on everyone. The EU therefore needs to take the necessary measures to ensure that oil exploration and extraction in Europe is carried out in accordance with the best safety regulations, thus avoiding future environmental and human disasters.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – (LV) I fully supported this proposal for a resolution. I believe that it is necessary to increase the liability of oil extraction companies so that, in the event of an accident, the insurance and reserve fund for accident prevention could comfortably cover all the costs of the clean-up and all the possible damage done to the environment. A 100% bank guarantee and stricter plant licensing in the oil exploration and extraction sector are also essential.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico clearly demonstrates that financial considerations all too easily result in safety regulations being flouted and common sense going out of the window. In the North-East Atlantic, the conditions at depth are similar to those in the Gulf of Mexico and hence, the risks are similar, too. The safety debate in Europe is all the more important in light of the fact that the majority of oil drilling and exploration takes place in the waters of the North Sea and that, in view of the tightening up of the safety requirements in the United States and contrary to the obligations of the OSPAR Convention, the neighbouring states were not able to reach an agreement. It is even more important because, in times of high oil prices, it becomes particularly profitable to develop poorly accessible oilfields and to extract under the most adverse conditions, such as from deeper and deeper depths. I therefore welcome the fact that appropriate safety standards are now to be sought at EU level and I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution.

Rareş-Lucian Niculescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted for this report as it deals with an extremely important subject. However, I wish to point out that the issue needed to be raised with a more general framework in mind. The European Commission is currently revising EU legislation on environmental liability and should propose, in this context, solutions for avoiding ecological disasters, like the recent one in Hungary, resulting from the spillage of a large quantity of pink sludge.

Teresa Riera Madurell (S&D), in writing. – (ES) In view of the consequences in the Gulf of Mexico, I think that the resolution adopted by Parliament today on the EU's actions in the exploration and extraction of oil in Europe is extremely important.

As a Member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, I must point out that the production of deep sea oil and gas is important to security of supply in the EU. Deep sea oil and gas production does not take place under such extreme conditions as in the Gulf of Mexico. However, every precaution must be taken. This is why we must work on prevention so that we have up-to-date legislation that is effectively applied and prevents natural disasters from occurring. However, we cannot get around the fact that this type of extraction and production always carries risks. Therefore, we must also think about building up a genuine capacity to respond to possible accidents such as the one that occurred in the Gulf of Mexico.

This resolution is a step in the right direction as it encourages progress in the EU in terms of both prevention and response.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) Is the European Parliament willing to vote for a moratorium on all new offshore oil drilling? That is the way to learn from the human and ecological tragedy of the oil catastrophe that took place on 20 April in the Gulf of Mexico: 11 dead, 800 millions litres of oil spilled and the devastation of biodiversity. That is the only real political issue of today's vote. By rejecting the moratorium, Parliament's plenary has sent a clear message which does not address people's concerns at all. Nonetheless, it is perfectly obvious that offshore drilling is a risky operation and every precautionary measure has to be taken: strengthening the principle of environmental liability, establishing a special European fund to be maintained by mandatory contributions from operators of offshore installations, especially when drilling is carried out in the Arctic under conditions of extreme cold and at great depths. One thing is clear: by refusing to vote for a suspension of new offshore drilling operations, the European Parliament falls short of the European Commission's position of a de facto moratorium, as announced in Commissioner Oettinger's speech on 7 July.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) Almost five million barrels of oil leaked into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico between April and September 2010 following the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform, seriously damaging both the economy and the ecosystem of the region. In total, more than 400 species – whales, dolphins, manatees, herons, egrets, etc. – were endangered. Since the European Union has many oil platforms – there are more than 500 in the North Sea – everything must be done, at European level, to avoid such a catastrophe in our territory. By voting in favour of this resolution, I am calling for strict European rules to be developed for the prevention of accidents on oil platforms and for legislation to ensure that uniformly high safety standards apply across all European Union oil platforms and drilling operations, from the Atlantic Margin to the Black Sea. Furthermore, I welcome the Commission's decision regarding a 'stress test' on oil drillings in EU waters.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – (FR) The risk of serious accidents in European Union waters is high and Europe is, quite simply, not equipped to deal with the devastating consequences of such an accident. The Commission itself acknowledged this during the consultations. Offshore oil drilling exploration has increased exponentially and the risks have therefore increased also, but safety, on the other hand, remains largely inadequate. In this context, only a temporary moratorium on all new offshore drilling in EU waters could have reduced the risks, and also sent a clear signal regarding our dependence on fossil fuels. Once again, therefore, we shall have to rely on the little credibility and trustworthiness we can ascribe to the oil industry.

Oreste Rossi (EFD), in writing. – (IT) After what happened to the notorious platform in the Gulf of Mexico, which caused an environmental disaster following a rupture in an oil well pipe, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the European Commission to pay attention to drilling in the sea, with particular reference to platforms in EU waters. I should have preferred the Committee on the Environment to have gone further and requested similar guarantees from other European non-Member States such as Norway, 90% of whose GDP is linked to oil extraction from the sea. The EU is a world economic power and must be capable of demanding that countries that are not Member States but count the EU as their principal partner also observe the safeguards in place for activities in dangerous deep waters.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), in writing. – (PL) The natural catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico caused by the sinking of the Deepwater oil platform provides an ideal opportunity to consider Europe's plan of action to prevent similar events. The unimaginable damage sustained by the ecosystem of the Gulf of Mexico and the southern coast of the United States as a result of the oil spill should be a strong incentive for us to act. Firstly, the Union must increase its ability to react quickly if such a disaster takes place. We should ensure that an appropriate coordination system for national services is in place in order to increase their effectiveness when combating a spill or removing damage caused by one. Secondly, increased safety monitoring of existing installations or those being built is essential. We should, for example, improve monitoring of the process whereby licences are granted for oil drilling or leasing installations to third parties. Thirdly, an appropriate legal framework must be created to regulate matters of responsibility and the making good of any damage, as there is a whole raft of significant legal loopholes in the provisions in force. We should also consider the introduction of a compensation fund which would fund anti-crisis measures in such situations.

Dominique Vlasto (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I supported this balanced resolution, which does not ban future oil exploitation in deep water, but adjusts it to ensure respect for European security standards, which are amongst the strictest in the world. These standards must, in my opinion, guarantee both a sustainable energy supply to Europe and the security and durability of offshore activities. We all remember the terrible pictures of the black sea in the Gulf of Mexico, the dreadful loss of human life, the distress of the citizens affected by the disaster and the considerable damage resulting from the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon rig. It is for this reason that I renew my appeal to create a genuine European civil protection force capable of being deployed rapidly and effectively following disasters of such seriousness. Offshore exploitation and extraction in deep water are essential for the rarefaction of petroleum. However, their impact on the environment must be controlled, and we must guarantee that they do not constitute a future threat to marine and coastal

areas and to biodiversity. This is a major challenge for the international and environmental image of the European Union, which is producing very positive results in this area.

- Motion for a resolution: Conference on Biological Diversity - Nagoya 2010 (B7-0536/2010)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution, following the debate with the Council and the Commission in which we discussed the European Union's plans and main strategic objectives for halting the loss of biodiversity, on the eve of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. I therefore hope that the EU will take a strong, consistent position to this conference, with ideas about the concrete measures that will be taken to guarantee the contribution that biodiversity protection will make to sustainable development. I would remind you that preserving biodiversity is fundamental to ecosystem quality, has direct effects on essential functions such as food production and water supply, and prevents landslides and floods. I also hope that the political responses aimed at ensuring the integration of biodiversity with economic activities such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism will be bold and ambitious enough to protect this invaluable, yet extremely fragile, heritage – as in my region, the Azores – from other blinkered external interests that may threaten it.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the European Parliament resolution on the EU's objectives relating to biodiversity. Faced with the progressive loss of species and, therefore, of biological richness on earth, it is important for us to set ambitious objectives on the protection of fauna and flora while ensuring that humankind can continue to exploit their riches. As such, Parliament has advocated objectives which will allow resources to be conserved by depending on a strict regulatory system and by promoting new technologies.

Liam Aylward (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) I voted in favour of this motion in advance of the COP 10 meeting on Biodiversity in Nagoya in Japan this month. It is estimated that the global extinction rate is between 100 and 1 000 times higher than the usual natural rate, and human agency is chiefly responsible. It is very disappointing that the 2010 targets for ending the loss of biodiversity have not been achieved. Agricultural land accounts for 45% of the EU total and is a valuable habitat containing a wealth of biodiversity. The agricultural sector has contributed to EU biodiversity, and many animal and plant species now depend on the agricultural sector and farming practices. For example, it is sheep and cattle grazing that maintain the diversity of flora of open grassland. Biodiversity issues must be taken into account when farming practices are being implemented. Assistance and support must be provided for agri-environmental measures to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity. The importance of the agriculture sector to the environment must be addressed in Nagoya, and this issue should be central when the future and budget of the CAP are being discussed from now on.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I agree with this resolution. Given the current situation, where biological diversity has declined by 30% over the last 40 years, and future projections that the rate of biodiversity loss will accelerate ten-fold, it is necessary to take decisive action now to preserve biodiversity and promote the sustainable use of biodiversity. Biodiversity loss poses a threat to food security, and exacerbates energy depletion and climate change. In order to avoid the negative impact of these processes, the Commission and the Member States must cooperate by preparing a sustainable EU strategy on biodiversity preservation, which would be reconciled with the objectives of combating

poverty, managing waste sustainably and reducing climate change. Adequate financing will unavoidably be required to implement the planned actions and strategies. It is likely that public sector support will be insufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to attract investment from the private sector and to find new sources of financing. Furthermore, while approving the new multiannual financial framework, it is necessary to consider the plans drafted and to ensure they have the required financing.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The resolution on the EU's strategic objectives for COP 10 on biological diversity, to take place in Nagoya, is of particular importance in 2010, which the United Nations has declared the International Year of Biodiversity, and given that neither the global target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 nor the EU target on halting biodiversity loss have been met.

The preservation of biodiversity, along with the sustainable use and fair distribution of the benefits resulting from genetic resources, should continue to be defended, and I believe that this is reflected in this resolution. The Commission and the Member States must speak with one voice at COP 10, and their internal decision-making processes need to be fast-tracked. It is particularly important to strengthen diplomatic efforts with third countries.

Finally, I believe that it is crucial for the Commission and the Member States to integrate the environmental element into their relations with third countries, with the emphasis on the importance of pursuing an integrated approach and 'green diplomacy'.

Corina Crețu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of the resolution on the EU strategic objectives for the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, primarily because I firmly believe that biodiversity conservation is conducive to the sustainable growth of developing countries. Indeed, the fact that neither the global biodiversity objective set for 2010, namely, the sharp reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss, nor the EU objective to halt biodiversity loss, has been achieved makes the additional actions aimed at achieving these objectives even more urgent.

Another concern is the illegal use of genetic resources, which has, in most cases, an adverse impact on the target countries for such practices. I agree that biodiversity conservation issues are raised only intermittently in public debate. This is why I support the proposal expressed in the text of the resolution about making a more sustained and targeted effort to promote biodiversity conservation measures among ordinary citizens. We need to understand and support these issues. I feel that it is just as important to make an effort to include biodiversity conservation as part of civic education in our countries.

Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), in writing. – (RO) Given that halting biodiversity loss is not an urgent item on the European and international political agenda, I welcome the implementation and adoption of a set of specific indicators based on scientific data for measuring the progress made on biodiversity in terms of achieving the European Union's strategic objectives and targets.

Mário David (PPE), in writing. – (PT) In a matter that is as sensitive as it is essential, such as the preservation of biological diversity as both European and global natural heritage, it is important that the Member States and the Commission come to a consensus on the position that the European Union should take at COP 10. I therefore welcome this motion for a resolution. The complexity involved in the preservation of biodiversity calls for many mechanisms, solutions and efforts.

I therefore believe that the promotion of synergies between the various world organisations, Member States and NGOs will allow the development of instruments for safeguarding biodiversity under policies of environmental preservation which promote this objective. Lastly, I would like to highlight the need to signal the economic benefits arising from market intervention in biodiversity conservation and the inclusion of environmental issues in the agenda of the Member States and the Commission regarding relations with third countries, also known as 'green diplomacy'.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) It is regrettable that, despite the commitments made by the EU during the EU summit in Gothenburg in 2001, biodiversity loss has still not been halted. This resolution reminds us that biodiversity plays a key role in the fight against worldwide hunger and in food security, and that it is a prerequisite for any attempt to diminish climate change and to adapt to it. It is time for all the Member States to implement the Natura 2000 legislation in full, as well as the Habitats and Birds Directives, and to take initiatives to preserve marine biodiversity. This policy in favour of biodiversity must be conducted at both European and international levels in order to integrate these concerns into policy on development cooperation and the external activities of the Union in particular, as well as into all future agreements concluded within the WTO.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) As I have already had occasion to mention, in relation to the report by Mrs de Lange that was put to the vote in the last part-session, 'I (...) agree with the need for the EU in its entirety, and particularly those areas covered by Community policies, to find a sustainable strategy for protecting biodiversity and preserving ecosystems. I believe that this becomes particularly relevant in the area of agriculture and fisheries, for which reason I am monitoring particularly closely the reforms of the common fisheries policy and the common agricultural policy that are being prepared. This is because the adequate and sustainable preservation of biodiversity, while essential and desirable, cannot be a brake on the sustainability and development of agriculture and fishing.'

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The United Nations has declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. Unfortunately, the European Union will not achieve its biodiversity target for 2010; the loss of biodiversity is continuing at an alarming rate. The rate of loss is projected to accelerate tenfold by 2050. This loss of biodiversity is unacceptable, not only from an ethical, but also from an ecological and economic perspective, as it prevents future generations from enjoying the benefits of a healthy biodiversity. It is crucial that the Commission and the Member States speak with a single voice and increase the speed and effectiveness of their internal decision-making processes so that they can achieve a rapid consensus on the internal EU position at COP 10, as well as devoting a greater volume of resources and more time to their diplomatic efforts in relation to third countries.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) This resolution contains some points that are positive and important, others that are ambiguous and unclear, and yet others that are negative and even worrying. We share the concern expressed about the failure to meet EU and world targets on significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss. We welcome aspects such as sharing the benefits of genetic resources, rejecting patents on life forms and living processes, protecting traditional knowledge and the practices of indigenous peoples, making the connection between genetic diversity and global food security, assessing the impact of biofuels, and drawing attention to the problem of exotic species. However, we vehemently reject and criticise the intention to move towards new forms of private appropriation of nature and natural resources, such as the introduction of 'payment for

ecosystem services', which is advocated more than once in the resolution. The ambiguous and unclear aspects should also be mentioned, such as advocating that 'the values of biodiversity and the opportunities derived from its conservation and sustainable use are integrated into national accounts'.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The vote in favour of the motion for a resolution on the EU strategic objectives for the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to be held in Nagoya (Japan) from 18 to 29 October 2010, is principally due to the need to arrive at this important meeting with a common European position that can be supported by as many other participating countries as possible. Only if we have clear ideas on objectives and proposals can we really play a decisive role in the global agreements that will be reached. In particular, the resolution rightly stresses the need for urgent intervention to meet the target of reducing the loss of biodiversity on a wider scale through the application of already available resources.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The rampant rate of man-made biodiversity loss is worrying. Biodiversity should be viewed as the most reliable barometer of the state of the environment. Therefore, as the EU is faced with alarming biodiversity loss figures in which 42% of mammals, 43% of birds, 45% of butterflies, 30% of amphibians, 45% of reptiles and 52% of freshwater fish are threatened with extinction, I believe that the legislation that has just been implemented is essential and crucial to the conservation of biodiversity, and even its reinforcement. We must therefore be ambitious with regard to biodiversity in order to achieve the strategic objectives for 2020. That is why I voted as I did.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Biodiversity is the basis for the existence of the whole of humankind, which implies that biodiversity and natural habitats must be preserved. Poor sections of the population are especially affected by the reduction in biodiversity and the loss of ecosystems, as they often rely on natural products in order to survive. It ought to be in the interests of Western governments to preserve this diversity and to take action to raise awareness of this matter because, in the long term, the preservation of biodiversity can only be beneficial from an economic point of view, too. I am abstaining from the vote because the goals have been set too high and the EU's leading role in this regard will only achieve its purpose if large nations like China are also prepared to change their way of thinking.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) The European Union is concerned by the rapid rate of biodiversity loss and by the fact that the global 2010 biodiversity target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss has not been met. In order to achieve ambitious goals, it is necessary, as quickly as possible, to adopt concrete indicators based on scientific data in order to measure progress towards the strategic targets. Studies conducted to date estimate that the welfare loss arising from the loss of biodiversity is currently around EUR 50 billion per year (just under 1% of GDP), rising to EUR 14 trillion in 2050. Therefore, the European Union considers this problem to be extremely urgent. I endorse the conviction that many links exist between protecting the climate, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and halting biodiversity loss. Steps taken to protect biodiversity have a positive effect on climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. I agree with the appeal contained in the resolution for support for efforts to enhance synergies and links between biodiversity and climate policies. However, in order to help prevent these global problems, there is a need to increase drastically the global funding for biodiversity protection, notably through existing funding sources, as well as new and innovative sources, including new and innovative market-based instruments.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Biological diversity is a rich heritage which we have inherited from past generations, and which we should leave for future generations. Quite apart from any anthropological point of view, it is also important to recognise the intrinsic value of this biological diversity.

At present, one in five species is at risk of extinction. This is a frightening figure which calls upon us to take appropriate action to defend and protect biodiversity.

In view of this, I welcome this resolution, which is ultimately aimed at promoting the effective and decisive implementation of the previously established objective for 2010 to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, and which systematises the different paths for urgent action for the protection of biodiversity, establishing new objectives for 2020.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The European Union must have the same aggressive approach in the international arena with regard to the protection of biodiversity as in the fight against climate change. The task of conserving biodiversity promises to be just as difficult at Nagoya as at Cancún to reverse the ruinous trend in global warming. The figures are there to remind us of the scale of the challenge: 30% of animal and plant species have disappeared since 1970. In Europe, the loss of biodiversity continues even though, as a result of growing awareness, ecological zones called 'Natura 2000' were set up covering almost 18% of European territory. What should we expect at Nagoya between 18 and 29 October 2010? At best, that the European Union speaks with one voice. It must also have the courage to speak about topics that can provoke anger, even with Japan, the host country, which cannot continue to use unsustainable and particularly barbarous methods of fishing for whales and dolphins with impunity. It must also give a positive message: the best way of protecting the diversity of species is to incorporate this concern horizontally into economic activities, such as trade, tourism and transport.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Although our first intention was to support the text, Amendment 1 to paragraph 16, tabled by the EPP Group and the ECR Group, finally led our group to abstain.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Biodiversity affects the life of every one of us. However, as a result of human activity, the process of biodiversity loss around the world is advancing with increasing speed. Symptoms of this include mass deforestation, shrinking fish stocks and the disappearance of yet more species. Scientists estimate that 15-40% of species may disappear by the end of the 21st century. We should be aware that biodiversity loss has an adverse effect on the action of ecosystems and the services they deliver, such as the provision of food, purification of water, fertilisation of soil, protection against floods and production of energy. Biodiversity is endangered by many factors, for example, climate change, uncontrolled suburban development and invasive alien species. However, I would like to concentrate on one specific issue. I am thinking of agriculture, which is often cited as a factor which poses a threat to biodiversity. Certainly, one can agree that industrial agriculture is not environmentally friendly. I think, however, that a significantly greater threat to the environment is the discontinuation of agricultural activity. We have been seeing an intensification of this process recently. The ever lower profitability of agricultural production, which is caused, among other factors, by price fluctuations, means that people are turning away from agriculture, and this is causing the disappearance of life over large areas.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) From 18 to 29 October, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will take place

in Japan. Both at a global and at a European level, the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss has not been met.

As Parliament's resolution underlines, unless something is done quickly to reverse it, the loss of biodiversity will be significant and uncontrollable in the medium and long term.

Parliament demands that living things should not be subject to patents and that the plundering of genetic resources by business and industry, particularly in developing countries, should cease.

The protection of biodiversity is essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

I therefore supported the resolution including the amendments proposed by the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left and the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance.

In a few weeks' time, the climate change conference takes place in Cancún and it is therefore high time that the international community and, above all, the European Union, given its commitment to environmental protection, took heed of the report entitled 'The economics of ecosystems and biodiversity' (TEEB), and its recommendations at the Nagoya conference.

It is extremely urgent to repeat the fact that the fight for biodiversity, the fight against climate change, and the fight against poverty, are intimately linked, as are the answers for dealing with them.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), in writing. – (DE) Although studies have estimated the current economic costs of the loss of biodiversity to be around EUR 50 billion per year, this matter is not on the international political agenda. Excellent instruments already exist at European level and we need to enhance these in a targeted way and coordinate them with climate policy action in order to obtain the maximum benefit from the investments. Investment in the preservation of biodiversity will pay dividends.

- Report: Othmar Karas (A7-0251/2010)

Sophie Auconie (PPE), in writing. – (FR) The Basel II agreements regulate banking activity and, in particular, the own funds that banks have to conserve to ensure their solvency. In this resolution, the European Parliament advocates the long-term management of risks and profits, as well as some rules which are adapted to the size of banks – so that the most important ones do not feel that they are let off – and argues that they should not pass on the costs of adapting to the new legislation to private individuals. In addition, Parliament is concerned that Basel II may not be respected in a uniform manner across the world. It is pressing the European Commission to take steps towards greater harmonisation. I think that these recommendations go in the right direction: reducing the risk of a future crisis and defending private individuals. I therefore voted strongly in favour of this resolution.

Vito Bonsignore (PPE), in writing. – (IT) I welcome the excellent work done by the rapporteur, Mr Karas, in preparing an invaluable own-initiative report on the reform of Basel II to strengthen the banking system in the light of the financial crisis. Europe must, in fact, play more of a part in this phase of the negotiations so that we can avoid a possible penalisation of the European economic system and distortions of competition. Compared to the US system, the European system is mainly financed by bank lending, but the financial crisis of the last few years in Europe and the resulting lack of liquidity have led to a drastic reduction in loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, which form the backbone of

our economy. I voted in favour of this document because I am convinced that in the negotiations on the reform of Basel II, the EU must strive to obtain equal terms with the United States on accounting standards, parity of requirements between commercial banks and investment banks, an unambiguous definition of liquidity and greater transparency with regard to the role of rating agencies. In order to cope with future periods of stress, we must henceforth provide ourselves with a greater quantity and quality of capital and greater liquidity. At the same time, it would be expedient to take countercyclical measures and create economic surpluses.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution as I agree that the issue of ‘too-big-to-fail’ financial institutions should be addressed, whereby capital requirements and countercyclical buffers should be proportionate to the size, level of risk and business model of a financial institution. I would like to call for an in-depth study of capital instruments before and after the crisis in order to evaluate the importance of specific capital instruments and their relevance in a crisis situation. The forthcoming European Banking Authority should play a leading role in drawing up and implementing measures relating to capital requirements and the rules on countercyclical buffer standards at EU level.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) I abstained on this report because, although it recognises the problem in theory and supports the need to revise the Basel II rules and reinforce supervision of the financial system and banks, it balks at adopting strict rules. The report underestimates the degree to which the banks were to blame for the crisis, due to their over-indulgent and speculative tendencies, especially over recent years. We need a new perception of the character and role of the financial system if we are to have European economic policies which foster sustainable growth and, ultimately, address social needs.

Mário David (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I am voting in favour of the bulk of the measures proposed in this report. Countercyclical regulation requires standardised criteria which ensure comprehensive and careful monitoring of the financial markets and the market environment by supervisory authorities. In particular, these include the full exchange of information, synchronisation of regulatory measures and the real-time monitoring of exposure and risk, including a requirement for audit trails on all financial market transactions. Developing high quality liquidity standards is therefore a key part of the crisis response. However, these should be sufficiently differentiated in order to take account of the particularities of banks’ business models and their respective risk profiles. In view of this, the forthcoming European Banking Authority should play a leading role in drawing up and implementing measures relating to capital requirements and the rules on countercyclical buffer standards at EU level.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution as I believe that the supervision and regulation of financial market participants are essential for safeguarding the interests of the public and the financial and economic stability necessary for development and progress. Moreover, the crisis that we are experiencing at present has shown that bank capital was clearly insufficient in terms of solvability and solvency. Capital requirements and countercyclical buffers should be proportionate to the size, level of risk and business model of a financial institution. On the other hand, I would like to highlight the appeal and warning to the Basel Committee on the importance of the necessary adjustments to the regulatory framework so that the European economy and banking

sector, which are characterised by a strong interdependence, are not prejudiced and placed in a situation of competitive disadvantage on the global market.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) Attempts to improve the international financial system, at Basel Committee, G20 and European Union level, seem to me to be of no use at all.

The September agreement on the volume and quality of capital that banks are required to hold was welcomed as a great advance and a great victory over a sector that was set against these measures and threatening to cut off the supply of credit. It was a Pyrrhic victory apparently, since, following the agreement, stock exchange prices for the sector scarcely increased, which was not a good sign.

The banks have until 2019 to comply with the new provisions and, in the meantime, anything can happen. Risk analysis, which we already know to be utterly ineffective, remains central to this system. The problem of liquidity and leverage ratios has not been resolved, any more than that of off-balance sheet assets and securitisation. Financial institutions which do not receive funding from the public sector, such as hedge funds, are not affected despite how dangerous they are and their perverse way of operating.

In short, nothing has been resolved, nor will it be without fundamentally changing the system instead of trying to patch it up.

Anne E. Jensen (ALDE), *in writing*. – (DA) The Danish Liberal Party's MEPs have voted in favour of the Karas report (A7-0251/2010). The report deals with a number of essential points as well as calls for Basel III to be implemented in the most appropriate way and with respect for the differences in the financial systems. However, the Danish Liberal Party's MEPs regret the fact that more account was not taken of the Danish recommendations for the protection of the Danish mortgage credit model. Some of the Basel proposals may cause significant damage to effective mortgage credit models in Europe, including the Danish one.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – The Basel Committee seeks to reform the Basel II framework in order to strengthen the resilience of the banking system. The Committee's proposal aims to improve the quality of the capital base, and extend and strengthen the coverage of the capital framework. The Committee also intends to introduce a leverage ratio to help contain excessive build-up of leverage in the system and other supplementary countercyclical measures such as capital buffers to be built in good times. Moreover, global standards on liquidity management are proposed.

However, whilst there is a strong international commitment to revise the Basel framework, it is crucially important that such revision strikes the right balance between various business models, investment and traditional retail banking, different legal forms and predominant financing of the corporate sector through bank lending in Europe.

Furthermore, the European Parliament must play an active role and strongly influence the revision of the rules already in the process of negotiations in the Basel Committee. The European Parliament, as the democratically elected European body which will later on co-legislate on the Commission proposal for the Capital Requirements Directive (CRD 4 Directive), should be involved in the negotiations process at an early stage.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The vote in favour of the Karas report is due to the precision with which my colleague has recorded the progress that has been made with the

Capital Requirements Directive, but also the critical issues that are forcing us to urgently carry out this reform. Firstly, I agree on the need to guarantee an active and, above all, 'early' role for the European Parliament in the negotiations so as to ensure a kind of 'democratic control', enabling measures to be taken which correspond as far as possible to the requirements of all businesses. We must do everything we can to protect the end users of financial services, and so the new agreement must provide for a system that does not force banks to pass on their operating costs to them.

Arlene McCarthy (S&D), *in writing*. – At the heart of the financial crisis were banks taking excessive risks and failing to hold enough capital to cover those risks. The failures of those banks have brought on a crisis which continues to severely hurt citizens around the world. Citizens have paid twice, with costs of a taxpayer bailout followed by the pain of recession and spending cuts. To prevent a repeat of such a crisis requires a fundamental revision of the financial regulatory framework and this must include a stronger capital framework for banks. Proposals to improve the Capital Requirements Directive are therefore central to creating stable and responsible banks. This report endorses the aims and proposals set out by the G20 and the Basel Committee, to ensure banks hold sufficient amounts of capital of a suitable quality, and that they have the liquidity and stable funding necessary to withstand tough market conditions. Labour MEPs are voting for this report as it backs the reform process, but we do not support any calls to weaken the proposals adopted by Basel. We encourage further study of the impact of the measures where appropriate, but with a view to ensuring full, tough and timely international implementation.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This text does not measure up to the challenge that the current crisis and its economic and social consequences represent. The urgency is to radically change banking system rules, not to take half measures to preserve them. The Basel Agreement sets a ridiculously low level of capital requirements and prohibits none of the tools of speculation. I voted against this cover for speculation.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The global financial crisis which is continuing to cause problems to the economy in all countries has confirmed that a strong banking sector is of paramount importance in order to avoid similar situations in future. Basel II and the revision of the Capital Requirements Directive are to contribute to a strong banking industry, in conditions that, in future, will allow us to withstand any similar crises to those seen in the recent past.

The aim of this report is to improve the quality of the capital base and extend and strengthen capital requirements for risk coverage (such as counterparty credit risk arising from derivatives, repurchase agreements, etc.). It is also intended to introduce a leverage ratio to curb excessive use of leverage within the banking system, and other supplementary countercyclical measures such as the creation of capital buffers in favourable economic periods. Last but not least, it proposes global liquidity management standards. That is why I voted as I did.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution as I believe that:

- 'too-big-to-fail' financial institutions should be able to draw upon countercyclical capital that is proportionate to the size and level of business risk;
- the Basel Committee and the Commission should clarify the treatment of reciprocal financial cross-holding agreements;

- there should be an in-depth study of capital instruments as they are before and after the crisis, in order to evaluate the importance of specific capital instruments and their relevance in a future crisis situation;
- high quality liquidity standards are a key part of the crisis response;
- it is necessary to define the criteria for high quality liquid assets;
- the Commission should include all euro area sovereign debt as high quality liquid assets, regardless of its specific rating;
- the forthcoming European Banking Authority should play a leading role in drawing up and implementing measures relating to capital requirements and the rules on countercyclical buffer standards;
- countercyclical regulation requires harmonised criteria in order to ensure comprehensive and careful monitoring of the financial markets and the market environment by supervisory authorities.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The report sets out the EP position regarding the forthcoming revision of international standards and guidelines on capital and liquidity requirements for the banking system which are being adopted by the Basel Committee (the international forum established by central banks and supervisors of the banking sector), as well as the G20 commitments on this matter. These standards are supposed to be transposed and adapted to the EU legal framework through a revision of the Capital Requirements Directive (CRD). A Commission legislative proposal is scheduled during the first quarter of 2011.

Peter Skinner (S&D), in writing. – I wish to confirm my support for this report. As the Commission knows, Parliament has always felt that arrangements for the agreement of Basel II inadequately reflect the Parliamentary process. With so much at stake between the major financial nations, a reconsideration of issues such as capital ratios and leverage demand stronger oversight by Parliament. This report has helped correct the imbalance of institutional involvement from the EP and the Commission needs to acknowledge that.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (DA) I fully support the report's recognition of the fact that there are mortgage obligations and other types of securities issued that are, in fact, equally as liquid and secure as government bonds. I therefore also fully support the report's indirect support for the Danish mortgage credit model, even though I believe that Denmark should have been mentioned more explicitly in the text. The reason that I am abstaining from the vote is because, in the interests of competitiveness in the EU, the report does not call for the introduction of more stringent financial regulation than is found in the rest of the Western world, including the United States.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Adoption of the EU financial supervision package in September involved, in particular, the creation of bodies and mechanisms for micro-prudential supervision in the banking area, in coordination with the network of national supervisors. The own-initiative report on which we voted today focuses on a subject that I believe somehow falls within this new architecture and which I consider decisive for any economy. Defining the quantity and quality of own funds is certainly a matter of great sensitivity which needs to be analysed in terms of its impact – particularly on Europe's economic recovery – and its general context. Since our businesses are financed primarily by the banking sector, which is one of the pillars of the economy, it is crucial in

my view that the banks should manage their risks and profits within a long-term prudential perspective. Moreover, I believe these concerns should be discussed proactively and in terms of transatlantic cooperation. I voted in favour of this report since I agree with its overall content, which I see as one more step towards establishing new Union mechanisms for planning, coordination and supervision in the economic, budgetary and social spheres of the EU.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), in writing. – The current financial crisis has demonstrated the risks taken, and lack of capital held to cover those risks, by many banks. This irresponsibility continues to cost European citizens, both in terms of bank bailouts and spending cuts as a result of the ensuing recession. Any revision of the financial regulatory framework must include proposals to improve the Capital Requirements Directive and therefore central to creating stable and responsible banks. This report endorses the aims and proposals set out by the G20 and the Basel Committee, to ensure banks hold sufficient amounts of capital of a suitable quality, and that they have the liquidity and stable funding necessary to withstand tough market conditions. I voted for this report as it backs the reform process, but I will not support any calls to weaken the proposals adopted by Basel. I would also suggest further study of the impact of the measures where appropriate, but with a view to ensuring full, tough and timely international implementation.

- Report: Veronique De Keyser (A7-0245/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Up until now, the international community has not maintained an attitude of indifference, but has carried out many actions of solidarity to support the populations living in Africa. However, the level of development of this sector is still far below that in the West. If we consider that an African's life expectancy may be even 30 or 40 years less than that of a European, we can say that this remains a major problem, even now. Fellow Members, I support the solutions proposed in Mrs De Keyser's report and I wish to point out that the real solution to Africa's problem lies equally in constructing a foundation for the health care system and in providing prompt aid. To paraphrase a famous saying, I believe that 'if you offer the patient a drug, you have helped him for a day. If you offer him the foundations for a health care system, you have helped not only him for life, but also his children'. This is precisely the reason why I support a balanced policy for granting funds.

John Attard-Montalto, Louis Grech and Edward Scicluna (S&D), in writing. – The Maltese Labour delegation voted in favour of the report on health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and global health, which promotes fundamental issues and priorities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and halve extreme poverty by 2015. We also condemn the fact that in some areas, women are still subject to genital mutilation, violence and rape. We also fully agree with issues addressed in this report, especially the most pressing health problems in sub-Saharan Africa, and the general question of how to improve health care service provisions and social insurance schemes there. However, my delegation is not in agreement with the reference to the promotion of abortion in paragraph 6 of the report.

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – This report deals with a number of issues. Nevertheless, of great concern is paragraph 6 which deals with abortion. I am against abortion and cannot support a dossier that promotes these practices. This is why I have decided to vote against the report as amended.

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE), in writing. – (SV) The Swedish Conservatives have today, 7 October 2010, voted against the report (A7-0245/2010) on health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and global health. However, we would like to point out that we believe that the report deals with a vitally important subject – access to health care is a basic prerequisite for development. Hundreds of thousands of children in sub-Saharan Africa die each year of diseases that are not fatal for anyone who has access to basic care. In our opinion, however, this report does not have the answer to the question of how this should be provided. It is a fact that civil society has played, and in many countries continues to play, a very major role as care provider. To categorically reject the work done by private care providers and non-governmental organisations is not the right way to go about things for someone who has the welfare of the poor in mind. At the same time, we would like to stress that we do, of course, support the wording in the report concerning women's reproductive health and the condemnation of genital mutilation and the terrible acts of violence that women are still being subjected to.

Corina Crețu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) As far as I see it, the main merit of the resolution on health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and global health is that it tackles the issue on the basis of the specific features of the region in question. There is a real problem in implanting a model for organising social protection systems which is specific to Western civilisation in a totally different context. Many projects intended for developing countries have failed due to the adoption of an absolutist, Western-centrist approach, whether from Europe or the United States. This has led to resources being wasted and additional problems being created for the countries concerned. The specific situation of this area makes the observation even more obvious that we cannot treat health like a commodity. Consequently, forms of health care need to be identified which can be provided on a non-profit basis, inspired by the values of solidarity and democracy. The progress achieved over time, including through the contributions made by EU Member States, can be undone by adopting a hasty approach based on commercial considerations. I feel that the resolution tackles the issue in a fair, coherent manner, which is why I voted for it.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), in writing. – I support this report which seeks, in light of the EU's commitments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and halve extreme poverty by 2015, to address the most pressing health problems in sub-Saharan Africa and the question of what systems can be put in place to do so.

The report examines how universal, accessible and affordable health care systems can be set up and how we can share best practice from the European experience. In particular, the report looks at mutual health organisations which have already been established and proven to work effectively in several African states.

Mutual health organisations are not intended to take the place of the state; rather, they offer an alternative, enabling the obstacles to health care access to be overcome and providing improved access to quality health care for all citizens regardless of their income. Indeed, they have been able to tailor insurance provision to the socio-economic characteristics of populations in an informal economy which remain excluded from formal schemes and commercial insurance, and, as a result, they are an appropriate solution for achieving the goal of universal coverage in low- and middle-income countries.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) Africa is exhausted by the consequences of the crisis, natural disasters, extreme poverty, wars and epidemics, and it is therefore urgent

that we help to introduce a sustainable health policy. This is why I supported this report, which provides for health care systems financed in a mixed way by state resources, through international solidarity and through the participation of citizens. In order to achieve that, the European countries must keep their promise to allocate at least 0.7% of GNP to cooperation in 2010. The EU must support the numerous existing mutualist initiatives whose objective is to promote access to health care. The Member States are called on to provide their expertise and greater technical and financial support to the governments of developing countries in order to introduce and extend social security systems. Finally, the European Investment Bank also has a role to play in guaranteeing credit, cofinancing investments in clinics and taking on part of the remuneration of health professionals. It is only through these joint efforts that Africa will be able to benefit from a sustainable health care system which is accessible to all.

Harlem Désir (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) The reinforcement of health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa is a crucial aspect of development policies. Compensating for the shortcomings in care systems will also have an impact on public health worldwide, through improved training for medical professionals, appropriate prevention campaigns and reduced treatment costs. This will contribute to a fall in serious epidemics, such as HIV, tuberculosis and dysentery. It is not acceptable for private companies to hinder access to health care for the sake of profits, and it is even less acceptable for conservative religious movements to reject sexual and reproductive health policies and question the right to abortion, thereby putting the health of millions of women at risk. In order to improve the health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and throughout the world, it is essential for the European Union to be more in step with the rest of the international community. In particular, it has a role to play in encouraging the emergence of non-profit-making, solidarity-based mutual health structures, enabling the promotion of access to quality health care. This is why I support the adoption of Mrs De Keyser's report.

Lena Ek, Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE), *in writing.* – (SV) It is important for the people in countries on the African continent to have access to health care services. It is good, therefore, that we are having a debate on health insurance systems and on how health care can be organised in low-income countries.

Unfortunately, the tone and approach of the report could have been a great deal better. For example, it is regrettable that ideas still prevail in Europe that make it possible for phrases such as 'whereas people living in certain social and humanitarian circumstances do not always appreciate the concept of providence' to still be written.

We also believe that, in certain respects, the report has an outdated attitude to private health insurance and independent providers of health care. In certain parts of Africa today, it is vital for these independent providers to be able to continue to operate in order for there to be any health care available at all.

In spite of these shortcomings, we believe that the aim of the report is a good one and that it presents a good number of sound initiatives. We would also like to support the progressive forces working within the aid organisations for women's right to reproductive health. We therefore chose to vote in favour of the report.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and global health since it confirms the need for the international community to fulfil its commitments to the Millennium Development Goals and for the European Union to discharge its undertaking to step up its support for health services in

sub-Saharan Africa. I must emphasise the importance of supporting the development of sustainable mutual models, which should be based on solidarity – between North and South and among their members – but which, in the long term, should aim to gain their autonomy and become self-financing.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the lowest average life expectancy (ALE) at birth (of the 20 countries with the lowest ALE, 19 are in Africa) and the highest mortality rate and mother and child mortality rate. It is also the region with the highest prevalence of deaths resulting from HIV infection, the prevalence rate in the adult population exceeding 15% in several countries. These data can only be seen as striking, alerting us to the urgent need for humanitarian aid to these countries to be properly directed to the area of health and the provision of basic medical care to highly deprived communities. In this, the European Union and the individual Member States have a role to play, not because this situation of extreme need may be due to the colonial past of the African continent, as the report states, but because we Europeans are linked to Africa by special bonds of friendship and solidarity which must not be forgotten.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The serious problems and extreme health needs of African people are indisputable, as is the importance of effective intervention by the developed world in order to ensure better living conditions in a continent marked by numerous scourges, from natural disasters to wars, conflicts and oppressive dictatorships. It is, however, unacceptable to use this cause in order to force the introduction of fundamental and non-negotiable human values, as is the case with the right to life. The imposition of new, divisive concepts will not contribute to solving the problems of underdeveloped Africa. I therefore voted against.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The report contains aspects that we consider important, such as the belief that health is not a commodity and the concern it shows at ‘the growing commoditisation of health care’. We welcome its defence of the right of women to exercise full control over matters relating to their reproductive health, including procreation, contraception, abortion or sexually transmitted diseases. Equally important is the fact that it highlights the problem of the shortage of qualified health professionals in many African countries. Instead of trying to help keep these resources in their countries of origin, several European countries have contributed to exacerbating the brain drain by enticing many such professionals away. Where the report could and should have gone further is in what it calls ‘external factors’, which ‘can radically reduce the margin for manoeuvre of states (...) and can have a profound effect on the health of their populations’. We certainly cannot ignore the structural adjustment programmes, the foreign debt, or the cuts and privatisations aimed at achieving viability, including in the health sector, where there are huge shortages already. Nor can we ignore the way in which the EU tries at all costs to impose Economic Partnership Agreements, which will weaken these countries’ economies even more.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – The exchange of information is important no matter what policy area it is. However, in the health care sector, it is of vital importance to swap information between countries and regions, and in this way, it will be easier to examine what aspects are universal, accessible and affordable in regions other than the one it was first intended for. With this in mind, I welcome this report as it shows best practice from the European experience and we can see what that is applicable to in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I supported the report on health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and global health because I consider it essential to defend the right to health as a fundamental human right. Sadly, it is well known that the life expectancy of an African is at least 30 years less than that of a European, and this difference alone puts the model of North-South solidarity seriously to the test. It is also well known that the majority of sub-Saharan Africans, especially those living in rural areas, cannot afford the cost of medicines. The report that we have voted on today in Parliament expresses a preference for sustainable health services financed either from public funds or from international solidarity. In fact, in this context, the European Union can play an important role by taking appropriate action to lay the foundations of a transparent funding system based on health indicators derived from the real needs of the population. In addition, I consider it necessary to proceed with the implementation of programmes to educate the population in prevention and early diagnosis of diseases, and lastly, I would emphasise the primary role that the authorities on the ground must play to this end.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) It is imperative that we continue to pool our efforts so that the investment made by the European Union towards health systems in sub-Saharan Africa are effectively implemented in order to permanently reduce the large imbalance that currently exists between that continent and others, especially with regard to childbirth, life expectancy and the incidence of HIV.

It is, however, important to sound a warning to the rulers of these countries so that they use the available funds for their intended purposes, and to ensure that they are not diverted to other types of activities, because poor governance in certain countries often leads to the worsening of problems in health systems. I should also point out that the birth rate should continue to be preserved and promoted in these countries, and the voluntary interruption of pregnancy should not be easy. Whilst we should certainly respect the rights of women, the recurrent practice of interrupting pregnancies should not be the main factor in the birth rate. That is why I voted as I did.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I support the report on health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and global health. Health is not a commodity. Following the 2010 report on the Millennium Development Goals, and with five years to go until the deadline, it is the responsibility of each one of us to support our partner countries in the implementation of their national health policies. Health expenditure is not a cost but an essential investment for the sustainable socio-economic development of these countries.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) How can we accept the fact that the life expectancy of an African and a European can differ by 30 or 40 years? There are many factors, such as bad governance, natural disasters and extreme poverty, that contribute to creating a worrying situation; a situation in which health indicators in Africa are some of the most alarming in the world. As stated in the report, according to the World Bank, it is unlikely that developing countries will be able in the near future to finance their own national health systems from their tax revenue. In this context, non-profit-making systems with mixed financing from state resources, international support and public participation could help meet the immense challenge posed by health care in sub-Saharan Africa. Admittedly, some African countries have already embarked on some promising initiatives with the help of the international community. However, the European Union has a particular role to play in the implementation of solidarity-based health structures by providing guidance and funding basic health care systems, together with access to drugs. It must also

support programmes to educate the population in prevention and early diagnosis of diseases.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – The report deals with the absence of health insurance in sub-Saharan Africa, which penalises the majority of the population in obtaining access to health care. Those who have health care are the people who can afford it. The big majority of the population of sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in rural areas, is unable to afford health care or drugs, even of the generic kind, despite NGOs and other government programmes providing services. So the main message of the report is to put in place health insurance, based on a solidarity system, to allow the population to have access to health care. In this respect, the report calls on the Commission to support and encourage a health insurance system by bringing together public authorities, all stakeholders and donors.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Almost 10 million children under the age of five die each year, and of these, 4 million are newborn infants less than one month old. Infant mortality is almost entirely concentrated in poor countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. Even to this day, a woman dies every minute in the world from complications linked to pregnancy or childbirth. The main causes are haemorrhaging, infections and hypertensive crises. Statistics from the World Health Organisation show that the risk of dying as a result of pregnancy is 36 times higher for a woman in a developing country than it is for a woman living in a developed country. In the last few years, the number of fatalities has fallen by 34% but this statistic is less than one half of what would be required to meet Millennium Development Goal 5. Greater attention must be paid to helping those more at risk, namely, women living in rural areas and the poorest families, ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, and people living in conflict zones, and there must be more investment in health care systems so as to ensure that a better quality of care is finally made available to all.

Alf Svensson (PPE), *in writing*. – (SV) In today's vote in the European Parliament, I voted against the own-initiative report on health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and global health. The report deals with a vitally important subject – it is obvious that access to health care is a basic prerequisite for development. Hundreds of thousands of children in sub-Saharan Africa die each year of diseases that are not fatal for anyone who has access to basic care. It is a disgrace to us in the developed world. Aid targeted at making health care accessible is needed. In my opinion, however, this report does not have acceptable answers to the question of how this should be done. It is a fact that civil society, particularly the faith-based organisations, has historically played, and in many countries south of the Sahara, continues to play, a very important role as a care provider. To do as this report does and categorically reject the work done by private care providers and non-governmental organisations is definitely not the right way to go about things for someone who genuinely has the welfare of the poor in mind. I therefore voted against the report.

Marc Tarabella (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) Through the resolution on health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa and global health, the European Parliament has 'pointed out that women have the right to exercise full control over matters relating to their reproductive health, as regards procreation, contraception, abortion or sexually transmitted diseases'. However, I regret the fact that this measure was adopted by a slim majority – 313 to 229. This is about a fundamental right for which thousands of women have fought and still fight in Europe and throughout the world, often putting their lives at risk. Although I strongly deplore the position taken by a minority of my colleagues, I am very pleased by today's vote.

- Motion for a resolution: EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013 (B7-0539/2010)

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) My colleagues and I believe that we must capitalise on the successes of the European Union's regional policy. That means that it will have to undergo an evolution, not a revolution. It must remain a strong, well-financed policy, and one that is a genuine lever of economic development for all our regions. We want simplified rules, not only in words, but also in deeds. We firmly believe that outermost towns and regions should receive special attention. Having worked on this resolution, both at the working group stage and in Parliament's Committee on Regional Development, I have secured significant progress on two fronts: that more consideration be taken of the needs of potential beneficiaries and that the concept of GDP not be held needlessly sacred. I believe that GDP should remain the main criterion for allocating funds but that we should also consider other criteria. I am pleased with the compromise that has been found, so I voted in favour of this text. By adopting this resolution with a very large majority, we have joined forces and sent a very clear message to the European Commission and European ministers.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013. This text includes essential assertions such as the need, after 2013, to maintain a cohesion policy, which is a necessary condition for the union of the Member States. I believe that we must be very careful with regard to the notion of requesting that, in the framework of the second pillar of the common agricultural policy (CAP), rural development be coordinated with cohesion development objectives and managed at regional level to ensure that it is adapted to needs. It is perfectly possible to achieve regional adequacy by contractualisation without a mandatory instrument. I absolutely agree that cohesion policy should not be renationalised. Cohesion policy should be neither national nor regional. It should be European. We should move beyond a cohesion policy based on the reunification of Europe to a cohesion policy based on European planning and development. Making the Union the most competitive region in the world in economic and social terms, and the most environmentally sustainable: that is the ambition linked to the Europe of results that citizens expect.

Liam Aylward (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) EU cohesion policy aims to reduce differences in levels of development between European regions and to achieve economic and social cohesion, which is very important for rural community life and development. I voted in favour of this resolution and it is vital that the EU continue to support sustainable growth in rural and remote areas. Ireland has received some EUR 10 billion since 1973 through the Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Committee. I support what the resolution says about giving careful thought to the importance of regional development, and taking it into account in the EU budget, and about promoting a strong European regional policy with appropriate funding to achieve social, economic and territorial cohesion. Cohesion policy from 2013 onwards must meet the needs of the European regions, to help the EU community grow and flourish. It must be a simplified and transparent policy. There must be synergy with regional development policy and a coordinated approach, being managed at regional level, so that specific policy targets are reached and money distributed fairly.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I supported this resolution. Cohesion policy is a particularly important part of EU policy, which aims to reduce disparities between the levels of development of European regions and to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion. An effectively implemented regional policy has great added value for the whole of the EU and its economic growth. The European Parliament has frequently expressed its

position that cohesion policy is currently being developed against the backdrop of global challenges, which have a varying impact on the EU's regions. It is therefore necessary to fundamentally improve the overall coordination of cohesion policy at EU level. In reality, the complexity and severity of the requirements and rules applied to cohesion policy are one of the main obstacles preventing the exploitation of these instruments' potential. In order to ensure that cohesion policy objectives are achieved when the policy is implemented, there must be adequate flexibility so that it is adapted to the specific characteristics of individual regions so that they can overcome specific economic and social difficulties.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The cohesion policy is the most effective instrument available for applying European policies at regional level. The motion for a resolution adopted today contains important aspects establishing a close link with the EU 2020 strategy objectives. The 2014-2021 budgetary framework must support an ambitious cohesion policy in terms of allocated resources. In addition, in view of the impact of the economic crisis on the less developed regions, the convergence objective must continue to be given predominant weighting in the future as well. In the case of Romania, implementation of this policy allows proper convergence to be established with the other EU states, especially as all eight development regions in my country can benefit from the Structural Funds. Attracting and making the best use of these funds would have resulted in a 15% rise in GDP over the next five years. However, as a result of the low administrative capacity of the administration departments within the ministries, the rate of absorption remains one of the lowest in Europe. Consequently, I believe that it would be useful to reorganise these existing administrative structures at ministry level and apply stringent skills criteria for selecting staff. Furthermore, I think that macro-regional strategies, like the Danube strategy, need to be maintained as priority aspects of this policy.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) I voted for this resolution because the European Union must now begin to plan how to finance and coordinate EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013. I agree with the view of the European Parliament that we now have to plan and distribute EU money earmarked for the structural funds so that in the new long-term financial period, enough money is allocated to ensure the harmonious development of all EU regions. Europe is united, and so it is very important to achieve the objective of cohesion policy – to reduce disparities in the level of development of the European regions and to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion. I agree with Parliament's opinion that cohesion policy should be more results-oriented and that we should aim for even more effectiveness and usefulness because only then will this policy become more convenient and beneficial for consumers. To achieve this, we must fundamentally improve administrative procedures, increase financial control, coordinate national and regional procedures and make them more flexible and simple. In order to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, we must implement cohesion and regional policy and ensure that this policy is independent and covers all European regions.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) It is important to increase the EU budget, but it is also important to improve the flexibility and simplification of the rules of use in order for there to be better implementation of the budget. The EU should have political priorities which contribute to economic growth and the creation of more and better employment, along with policies which contribute to competitiveness, such as scientific research and innovation.

I would like to call for the architecture of post-2013 cohesion policy to offer a simple, fair and transparent transition regime, taking into account past experiences and the latest

trends in the social and economic situation of the regions concerned, as well as enabling them to continue on their path towards growth and development. The EU budget should be drawn up in conjunction with the European political agenda. For example, energy is on the agenda of all the European leaders, yet we are investing four times less in scientific research than we were in the 1980s. I believe that the European Union's 2020 strategy is a good starting point and a good working basis.

Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I believe that the European Social Fund should remain part of the regulation on general provisions concerning the cohesion policy funds. However, I think that it needs to operate according to its own rules.

Mário David (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Since its foundation, the European Union has promoted peace and welfare, an area of freedom and security, and a single market as essential values, and it has promoted social, economic and territorial cohesion through sustainable development. Today, these values, upon which we pride ourselves, should continue to guide the European integration process in the future, obviously along with its policy of regional development. 2013 is just around the corner.

Everyone's efforts are therefore important in achieving this objective, as the current situation in Europe is quite complex, and is undergoing profound changes following the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon. The adverse global climate has also refocused the priorities of the EU, with a view to settling specific or economic problems that need to be solved, but which cannot distract from the principles underlying EU regional policy. The architecture of post-2013 cohesion policy should clearly reflect the fact that cohesion policy is not a policy of redistributing financial resources between Member States and regions. Rather, it is, or it should be, a policy aimed at the EU's social, economic and territorial development.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) In adopting the resolution on EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013, the European Parliament has just given its support to the requests being made by the regions gathered together right now in Brussels for the Open Days. Parliament wants to give a strong political signal before the fifth cohesion report, due out in November, which will set the main objectives of EU regional policy after 2013. The social crisis that we are currently experiencing lends a special dimension to regional development policy. If the regions are to continue to cope with this period of economic restructuring, they need a proper budget. In order to ensure the success of the EU 2020 strategy, the regions also need to be more involved, and the European Commission must continue to simplify the procedures for accessing funds. Finally, cohesion policy must also be the subject of better communication so that European citizens can understand the important role played by the Structural Funds in major regional and social cohesion projects. This is one of the local level initiatives that Europe must promote.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution on EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013. Implementation of cohesion policy, which contributes to stable, sustainable economic growth and job creation in the European Union, is essential for the success of the Europe 2020 strategy. Although it is important for achieving the goals of this strategy, cohesion and regional policy should be independent and provide a framework for establishing strong synergies between all European policies.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) As I have had occasion to say at other times, EU cohesion policy is vital for reducing the imbalances in the various regions of the EU 27, for helping to alleviate imbalances, and for promoting European competitiveness. It is essential to help the least favoured areas to develop; to enhance the efficient allocation of funds for

innovation, technology and education; and to implement measures to stimulate employment and competitiveness, in particular. The Europe 2020 targets should be the driving force in this area as well, and I therefore welcome the recommendation to encourage greater use of the available technical assistance resources to enhance the capacities of small and medium-sized enterprises and non-governmental organisations.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The aim of cohesion policy is to reduce disparities between levels of development in European regions and mobilising the potential for growth in order to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion. This policy has proved essential to the process of European integration, the pursuit of modernisation and sustainable growth. In accordance with the spirit of the treaties, these features demand the application of a regional policy at EU level throughout the entire EU area, covering all European regions.

The outermost regions, border regions, regions with specific geographical features, and other regions facing specific development challenges, should continue to benefit from specific provisions. The current accumulation of long- and short-term challenges that the European Union is facing entails the adoption of the EU 2020 strategy so as to create a favourable framework for stable and sustainable economic growth and job creation in Europe. The implementation of cohesion policy is now essential to the success of this strategy. I would like to highlight the fact that territorial cohesion implies an approach aimed at territorial development, so there should also be sufficient flexibility to allow for adaptation to specific regional characteristics and support for less developed regions in their efforts to overcome their socio-economic difficulties.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) There are several positive aspects to this resolution, particularly where it insists on the objectives of cohesion policy, which aims to reduce disparities between the levels of development of European regions and mobilising growth potential to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion.

This is an area that facilitates the pursuit of modernisation and sustainable growth as well as demonstrating some solidarity. It should therefore have been given greater emphasis. It is essential for the regional dimension to be fully considered in the proposed review of the EU budget and the future financial framework, since otherwise it will be difficult to achieve social, economic and territorial cohesion.

Cohesion policy needs to be adapted to the outermost regions mentioned in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union through the adoption of specific measures. The Commission must propose permanent measures backed by adequate funding that can adapt to the needs of each outermost region in order to help them overcome their permanent handicaps. Border regions, regions with specific geographical features and other regions facing specific development challenges must also continue to benefit from specific provisions. However, we do not want cohesion policy to be subordinated to the priorities of the EU 2020 strategy, which stresses ‘competitiveness’, ‘deregulation’, ‘adaptability’ and ‘entrepreneurship’, always at the expense of cohesion and convergence.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) Future cohesion policy is currently being decided, while unemployment is growing and public finance shrinking across Europe. GDP in the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region, for example, is likely to fall to 75-100% of European GDP again. Measures must be implemented for 2013 onwards that take the changed economic situation in Ireland, and particularly in the BMW region, into account. Objective 2 programmes must focus in future on strengthening the regions’

capacity to contribute effectively to sustainable economic development in Ireland and Europe that is greener and smarter. Regional flights to the BMW region are an economic and social necessity. Thus, funding of the Public Service Obligation must be maintained, because these internal flights could not be operated without this money. EU support for cross-border cooperation must continue. Cross-border cooperation has the potential to combat fragmentation of the labour market, trading networks and infrastructure in border regions.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – Cohesion policy is a basic principle of European integration as it ensures equal development and the reduction of disparities within the EU whilst also protecting social and territorial cohesion. The Lisbon Treaty strengthened cohesion policy and thus, it is in all our interests that the future cohesion policy stimulates the development potential of the entire EU, encourages greater competitiveness of the European economy, and improves the quality of our lives.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) As a consequence of the inception of the Europe 2020 strategy within the Council and following the adoption within Parliament's Committee on Regional Development of a document on future cohesion policy, we have an appropriate and well-timed report aimed at restoring the central role of cohesion policy. The report rightly emphasises the relevance of the regional dimension following the introduction, under the new treaty, of an additional territorial status for economic and social cohesion, and makes due reference to the key principles of cohesion – multi-level governance, partnership and an integrated approach. For all these reasons, I shall vote in favour of the report.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Without an assertive cohesion policy like the one that it has always had in place, the EU would not have succeeded in reducing existing imbalances between more geographically disadvantaged regions and all the other regions. The strengthening of these policies at this stage, when the crisis is causing some delay in the arduous task of reducing imbalances, is vital for achieving the objectives outlined in the EU 2020 strategy and for the EU to achieve one of its main pillars of solidarity, which has already enabled the development and progress of most European regions.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – (LV) I should like to express my sincere respect for Mrs Hübner and thank her for this resolution, which she has drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Regional Development. The resolution raises in a very timely manner the issue of the application of EU funds earmarked for regional development and of how to secure an environment in which these funds may be applied more flexibly, taking into account countries' geographical location and the basic indicators of their economic efficiency. Unfortunately, in my country, Latvia, funds earmarked for the implementation of cohesion policy are applied in a very inefficient manner. The corruption endemic among officials in the Latvian Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government practically 'puts a brake on' both initiatives by individuals and on any steps towards efficient application of EU financial resources. Due to the lack of an information campaign in Latvia regarding cohesion funds, its population is practically ignorant of the opportunities offered by the EU. I voted for this resolution, so that I could use it in explaining to certain Latvian ministers and civil servants that it is time to get to work in the EU and, naturally, for the benefit of Latvia. The opportunities to renew Latvia that have been passed up are a crime against future generations.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) The cohesion policy system within the EU provides support to enable poorer regions to be brought to the same level as richer regions. It is intended to be used to balance out the consequences of uneven economic development. However, we must ensure that financial resources are allocated to the individual regions in a fair and transparent way. The criteria used in connection with the paying out of subsidies should also be clearly defined. We need to pay more attention to peripheral rural regions. I am voting against the resolution because it does not make it sufficiently clear to what extent the subsidies will be monitored and what formula is to be used to determine how these are to be distributed.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing.* – (PL) The motion for a resolution on European Union cohesion and regional policy after 2013 is a clear signal from the European Parliament to the European Commission over the minimum requirements for the design of this policy in the next programming period. The objective of cohesion policy is to reduce differences in the level of development of European regions and to increase growth potential to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion. Cohesion policy, which is an expression of European solidarity, plays an extremely important role in the Europe 2020 programme. Its effective implementation is essential for further modernisation and to ensure lasting, stable economic growth and job creation in Europe. It is also intended to increase competitiveness and improve the quality of life of the EU's citizens. I am definitely in favour of rejecting all attempts at renationalising cohesion policy or dividing it into sectors and embarking on a sectoral dispersion of the resources of this policy. Attention should be given to the necessity of multi-level governance and the significance of cooperation with regions so that cohesion policy will be as user-friendly as possible, as well as to the necessity of better coordination of rural development with cohesion development objectives.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – (FR) The aim of regional cohesion policies is to ensure the best possible welfare conditions for populations. In order to usefully assess these policies and improve the decision making with regard to the allocation of European funds, the EU must have social and environmental indicators in addition to GDP. It is no longer enough to have economic growth as the sole criterion for decision making. Cohesion policy is an expression of solidarity between European regions. Its decentralised management is the most effective way of responding to the regions' specific circumstances and requirements, and as such, it adds crucial value to national employment policies. This is why we firmly oppose any plans to renationalise the management of the European Social Fund. Renationalisation should not be the only option for giving this fund more weight and visibility.

Oreste Rossi (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) The objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion between the levels of development of the regions of the Union is important. In adopting a 2020 strategy, we need to create a framework favourable to stable economic growth and job creation. The resolution also calls for rural development to be coordinated with cohesion development objectives and managed at regional level to ensure that it is adapted to needs. Unfortunately, in the wake of the crisis, there are many rural areas in Europe that have become even more marginalised and, consequently, depopulated. Such a state of affairs causes degradation of the terrain, which intensifies hydrogeological instability. The EU must give the regions the opportunity to intervene with targeted subsidies aimed at repopulating areas experiencing demographic decline. Only in this way shall we be able to guarantee new jobs and greater regional development.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Cohesion policy is the great pillar of European solidarity. It is through this policy that we achieve the objective of reducing regional disparities and stimulate harmonious development throughout the European Union. A framework for the forthcoming 2014-2020 period must be established that can enhance the effectiveness of regional policy. Multi-level governance must be encouraged, with greater involvement of regional and local bodies in the law-making process, as required by the new Treaty of Lisbon, and compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, as decisions must be made at the closest possible level to the people. The special circumstances of the outermost regions, such as Madeira, which is where I am from, must not be forgotten. This group of European regions faces very particular development challenges and must continue to benefit in future from special provisions regarding the implementation of European policies. It would also be desirable to apply other indicators in addition to gross domestic product, which must continue to be the main criterion for determining eligibility for regional policy assistance. Such indicators must take into account the specific attributes of the regions, so as to provide a more complete picture of the reality of each region.

Dominique Vlasto (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I welcome the adoption of this resolution laying down the guidelines of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for the programming period 2014-2020. I believe that by calling attention to the regional character of the ERDF, we are reaffirming the need to take into account the specific features of the regions in the implementation of regional policy. Nevertheless, it is essential for the managing authorities to take account of the actual situation in the regions and to establish policy areas for the ERDF that truly meet the needs of communities and local economic operators. It must be acknowledged that the management of the ERDF in our regions is characterised by serious disparities, and that is why I call for the standards in this area to be harmonised at European level. It is equally important to offer more scope to alter, in the medium term, the policy areas according to economic and social conditions and developments in the regions so that the ERDF can provide real added value throughout the programming period. The ERDF is, in my view, a wonderful catalyst for growth, employment and territorial cohesion, and it must become an important tool for effectively supporting structural development projects for the benefit of the public and our regions.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) This report calls for a simple, fair and transparent transition regime after 2013. One of the key challenges for cohesion and regional policy has been climate change, which also – to varying degrees – will have a considerable impact on the regions of Austria because the sectors that will be affected most will include tourism, as well as agriculture and forestry. As indicated in the motion for a resolution, the limited resources must be focused on the key priorities, and common solutions need to be found to common problems.

- Motion for a resolution: Future of the European Social Fund (B7-0535/2010)

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union stipulates that: 'In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.' Thus, I think it essential to increase the effectiveness and visibility of the European Social Fund (ESF), that is to say, of the social dimension of EU regional policy. The EUR 10 billion invested each year in social Europe (lifelong learning, social inclusion, adaptation of workers, and so on) must be used in a way that is consistent with the objectives of the EU 2020 strategy and

must make real progress. However, the ESF must remain an integral part of EU regional policy so as to ensure that any increased differentiation between funds does not make matters more complex. I voted in favour of this text because it presents these issues in a clear way and launches a strong appeal to the European Commission: the ESF must become a key instrument of EU policies.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I agree with this resolution. A sustainable economic growth and job creation policy in Europe is essential. The implementation of this policy should be supported by reforms in education, vocational education and training and retraining programmes, in order to adapt them to labour market needs, and it should receive the backing of small and medium sized enterprises. It is very important for the planned instruments to work together in a coordinated and mutually supportive manner so that the best results can be achieved. At EU level, the European Social Fund (ESF) plays a key role in improving employment and working conditions and in workers' integration into the labour market. However, support from the structural funds alone is insufficient. In order to establish an effective and efficient system for financing social programmes, aid from the structural funds must be combined with other existing programmes, such as the European Progress Microfinance Facility, through which micro-credits are provided to small enterprises and support is given to people setting up a business, and other instruments.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The European Social Fund is a key instrument in helping boost economic and social cohesion in EU states. Maximum financial support from the fund would help strengthen the feeling of solidarity among European citizens, especially those in the new Member States. During the 2007-2013 period, the European Union has allocated approximately EUR 3.5 billion to Romania from the European Social Fund. The operational programmes are focusing on two areas. The first is aimed at developing human resources, while the second is intended to improve the public services and policies infrastructure through the 'Development of administrative capabilities' programme. In this context, the Structural Funds' potential needs to be strengthened through simplifying and improving the relevant procedures. The main aim is to help Member States attain the best employment opportunities and the most active participation on the part of citizens in society. In future, the European Social Fund will need to play an important role in supporting the Europe 2020 strategy. This will definitely require action to be taken at both European and national level.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) The future of the European Social Fund will clearly depend not only on the approach taken by European decision makers towards the future of the continent, but also on the way they have been able to draw positively on the experience of the past, a past that is telling us today more clearly than ever before, that the model applied up to now by the European institutions in the field of employment, training and work is a model that is no longer suited to the needs of the present-day economy. The EU 2020 strategy itself, together with its principal instrument, the Social Fund, will have to take account of the fact that the only employment and training policies that can make the outlay of European funds sustainable are those which are necessarily targeted at meeting local needs and strengthening and sustaining small and medium-sized enterprises as the cornerstone of the European economy. In future, we will have to pay much more attention than we have paid so far in the Social Fund and in the entire EU 2020 strategy to the local dimension and small businesses, which make up 99% of Europe's economic fabric. In the expectation that the Union's outlook on these vitally important issues will change, I am voting in favour of the resolution.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted for this resolution submitted by the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs because it is necessary to strengthen the European Social Fund (ESF) and increase its effectiveness, in particular, during the economic and social crisis, since this fund is one of the European Union's principal financial instruments for combating poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, it is very important to improve the ESF's financial procedures because it would enable Member States to use the ESF more easily and effectively to invest in skills, employment, training and retraining activities with a view to creating more and better jobs. I would also like to draw attention to the fact that it is very important for the Commission to distribute EU money allocated to the ESF in a targeted manner, because only then will this instrument directly help people to gain employment, find better jobs, overcome poverty, avoid social exclusion and lead life to the full. Furthermore, only a more effective and stronger ESF can lead to the implementation of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy in the fields of employment and social affairs and contribute to the reduction of unemployment and poverty in Europe.

Zuzana Brzobohatá (S&D), *in writing*. – (CS) I supported the resolution on the future of the European Social Fund for a number of reasons. First, I appreciate the fact that the resolution of the European Parliament recognises that structural funds remain, to a large extent, the chief instrument for financing aims in the area of social policy. At the same time, I support the request addressed to the Commission, emphasising the need for interdependence with other programmes, and support for cohesion with multi-year framework programmes such as Daphne, Progress, the Public Health Programme, and the 'Europe for Citizens' programme. No less important is the Commission's call to boost the potential of structural funds by simplifying and improving approaches and flexibility, with an emphasis on the dimension of social integration, in order to help Member States optimise the results of social policy and employment policy and achieve sustainable growth. Finally, I supported this resolution of the European Parliament because it emphasises that the regional policy and social policy of the EU form a mutually interconnected whole, and for the success of the Europe 2020 strategy, it is necessary to provide a clear framework for achieving the cohesion of all European policies and structural funds, an end which the resolution challenges the Commission to achieve.

Alain Cadec (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) The European Social Fund plays a vital role in social cohesion by helping to integrate workers in Europe's regions. Its action in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises, education and vocational training is essential to the success of the EU 2020 strategy. The European Social Fund's role could, however, be strengthened further. The future architecture of the Structural Funds for 2014-2020 will have to take into account the specific characteristics of that fund. Some adjustments could be envisaged. However, it is important to keep the European Social Fund within the framework of the general regulations on the Structural Funds, as is the case today. To grant it its own legal framework will inevitably have the effect of fragmenting European policies and creating pointless complications for the beneficiaries. European policy coherence must go hand in hand with an integrated vision of objectives and resources, which requires greater synergy between instruments. The European Social Fund should therefore continue to come under the regulation on general provisions concerning the funds, with its own rules, certainly, but under no circumstances with its own budget.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The European Social Fund plays a vital role in improving career and professional opportunities, promoting the adaptation skills

of workers to the demands of the labour market and integrating them into it, along with strengthening social inclusion. It is important for the Member States to use the European Social Fund to invest in qualifications, employment, training and retraining, with a view to creating more and better jobs.

The goals and objectives of the EU 2020 strategy can be achieved by using this instrument in support of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and adapting the education and vocational training systems to the needs of SMEs. There needs to be a big emphasis on modernising the education and vocational training systems, on decent work, including combating unstable and undeclared work, on gender equality, on creating conditions for reconciling work and private life, and on ensuring the inclusion of people who are excluded from the labour market.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) I abstained on this report because, although it calls for the European Social Fund to be reformed and strengthened, it puts the fund at the service of the EU 2020 strategy. We all know that the European Social Fund ‘was set up to reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across EU Member States and regions, and therefore promoting economic and social cohesion’. However, today, as the economic crisis pushes the EU even further into recession and unemployment, into company and factory closures, poverty and social exclusion, despite 2010 being declared by the EU as the year for combating poverty, a question mark hangs over this objective. The priorities of all the European Funds, including the ESF, need to be revised for the benefit of the citizens and societies of Europe, not to serve the EU 2020 strategy, which follows on from the demonstrably failed Lisbon Strategy. Certain points of the report, such as adjusting education systems and vocational education and training (VET) to the needs of business, clearly serve the needs of the market, not of the citizens of Europe.

Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), in writing. – (RO) Bearing in mind that the Structural Funds continue, to a large extent, to provide the main funding instrument for meeting social objectives, I believe that economic, social and territorial cohesion must be consolidated by improving employability and employment opportunities through encouraging a high level of employment and providing a higher number of better quality jobs.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution since I believe the European Social Fund should be the main financial instrument for achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. It is essential for the Member States to use this fund to invest in training and retraining activities with a view to improving people’s qualifications and creating more and better jobs.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) In view of the current employment situation in Europe, with unemployment rates reaching record levels in various Member States, I believe the Europe 2020 objectives can be achieved by using the European Social Fund (ESF) to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and to adapt the education and vocational training system to the needs of businesses so as to improve people’s employability. The success of the Europe 2020 strategy depends on the competitiveness of European businesses and industries and also our economic dynamics in the post-crisis world. To achieve that, we have to focus our efforts on the vitality and dynamism of businesses (especially SMEs and technological and scientific industries) and on training our people appropriately. My view is that the ESF should be at the service of these objectives, and I therefore fully support the emphasis that this resolution places on the importance of training and education as a

means of fighting poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, through creating wealth and enhancing competitiveness.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Due to the effects of the current economic and social crisis, the fight against unemployment and social exclusion have attracted the particular attention of the European public and the European institutions. In this context, the European Social Fund (ESF) is doubly important to the possibility of achieving the EU 2020 strategy objectives. Today, there is particular emphasis on training and professional skills in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, along with innovation and dynamism among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The aim is to promote more and better jobs, with a view to eradicating situations of poverty and social exclusion. I would therefore like to reiterate the importance and urgent need for the ESF to become more flexible, simple and adaptable, like the other structural funds, so as to promote a more effective response to the new European reality and new social problems.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We believe that the European Social Fund (ESF) should support the measures adopted by the Member States to encourage employment, promote the quality of work in all its aspects (training, working conditions, contractual relations, working hours and organisation of work), and help reduce social inequalities and disparities in the distribution of income.

An increase in ESF funds may help to achieve the objectives of social inclusion, the fight against poverty and social exclusion, and education and training, while also making a major contribution to economic and social cohesion.

The resolution adopted today by Parliament highlights some of these measures. It emphasises the essential issues on which the ESF should concentrate and draws attention to the need to maintain 'efforts to achieve social cohesion'. We need much more than ESF funds, however. We need to change policies. We need to get rid of the Stability and Growth Pact and replace it with a real Progress and Social Development Programme.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) Ireland has received financial support of over EUR 7 billion from the European Social Fund since the time it joined the European Union in 1973. This money was used mostly to tackle long-term and youth unemployment. Under the EU's Operational Programme for Human Resources for Ireland 2007-2013, the European Union is giving EUR 375 million to Ireland through the European Social Fund. This programme has a total budget of EUR 1.36 billion. This money is being used to provide training courses for unemployed people, disabled people, early school leavers and those on the margins of society. This is the era of globalisation. To address the challenges and opportunities which globalisation creates for the Irish workforce, the European Social Fund in Ireland is also supporting training programmes for lifelong learning, which can be adapted to deal with the realities of a globalised labour market.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on the future of the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF is a key factor in European social cohesion, supporting as it does employment, the integration of workers into the labour market and vocational training. In this text, we have clearly expressed our opposition to the European Commission's proposal to separate the ESF from the other funds. The opposite action should, in fact, be taken: this fund should be closely linked to the others, particularly regional policy instruments, so as to increase its effectiveness. We have expressed ourselves in favour of the ESF becoming a more effective, simplified and transparent tool, which must continue to act as a powerful catalyst for the construction of social Europe. The ESF

must be able to be deployed in the fight against poverty and social exclusion as a whole and must be able to fulfil the EU's objectives in this area.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – The European Social Fund (ESF) is the EU's main budgetary instrument to help social and labour market integration. However, it is clear that this resolution focuses too much on the role of the ESF boosting employment and not sufficiently on its key role in supporting the inclusion of vulnerable groups, which my group, the Socialists & Democrats, has always strongly supported. Instead, it is crucially important to focus ESF support on the vulnerable groups who suffer the most as a result of the economic downturn.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This report claims to defend decent work and to fight against precarious work. It is one thing to claim it, but we still need to provide ourselves with the resources to do it. The Europe 2020 strategy is going in the opposite direction of such a claim. What impact does all this talk really have? None. Why list the problems posed by the poor and say nothing of those caused by the rich? This text preaches hypocrisy.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The European Social Fund (ESF) is the instrument *par excellence* that allows the creation of new employment and job opportunities, the promotion of the adaptation of workers' skills to the demands of the labour market, and workers' integration into the labour market, along with reinforcing social inclusion. It is therefore vital for the European Union to achieve the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy in the field of social and employment affairs. Thus, the strengthening of this important instrument is essential for us to bring the outlined strategy properly to fruition, reinforced by support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are the driving force behind the whole economy and primarily responsible for economic and technological development, as well as the creation of jobs.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – (LV) In Latvia, European Social Fund funding has become the object of political and economic speculation. Certain dishonest civil servants are enriching themselves from funds earmarked for training and reskilling. Newly established training centres and other unlicensed institutions are simply 'laundering' money earmarked for the training of the unemployed and other low-income groups, while the qualifications of trainers are often below the necessary standard. The fees charged by certain 'training centres' are higher than those of the University of Latvia. The European Social Fund has to pay for this negligent state of affairs. I supported this resolution. I was particularly struck by Paragraph 15, in which the European Parliament 'calls on the Commission to strengthen the structural funds' potential through simplification, flexibility and improvement of procedures ... with the aims of helping Member States to optimise the output of social and employment policies and creating sustainable growth'. I voted 'for' in the hope that a monitoring mechanism that would crack down hard on dishonest political operators may be set up.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Attempts are being made to reduce economic and social differences between the Member States using the European Social Fund. In this regard, beginning with qualification measures is much more forward-looking in the interests of job security and job placement for European workers. We need to make full use of the potential that we already have so that trade and industry cannot import huge numbers of cheap foreign specialists on the pretext of there being a lack of skilled workers. In this connection, the various 'cards' that are being considered should also be rejected. However,

if the bringing to account and execution of projects leads to problems in many regions, and if the French PPP training programme, for example, has been waiting for payments for three years on account of a change in competences within the Brussels bureaucracy, the fund is failing in its mission. In any case, we need to make it clear that more attention needs to be focused on small and medium-sized enterprises as the 'true' employers. As this resolution essentially agrees with these considerations but contains a few shortcomings, I abstained from the vote.

Crescenzo Rivellini (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) We have voted today, in plenary, on a motion for a resolution on the future of the European Social Fund. As is well known, the European Social Fund plays a key role in supporting the Europe 2020 strategy, the principal objective of which is to achieve inclusive growth, a reduction in poverty, an increase in employment and a rise in training levels with the ultimate aim of creating new and better jobs. Seen in this light, the primary importance of the fund as a policy tool and its double value, in supporting employment policy and cohesion policy, on the one hand, and in real and harmonious regional development, on the other, can be understood. This last aspect – and I conclude – is of particular importance in that Europe cannot be said to be truly complete, cohesive and united if all the communities of which it is comprised are not truly developed and have not reached a level of growth that is both steady and uniform as far as possible. In particular, we must not forget the regions of southern Europe – the mobilisation of funds for the regions of eastern Europe, right and proper as it may be, must not be carried out at the expense of those regions that are the heart and soul of Europe.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – We have supported the text which, among other things, notes the key role played by the European Social Fund (ESF) in improving employment and job opportunities, promoting the adaptation of workers' skills to the demands of the labour market, and workers' integration into the labour market, and reinforcing social inclusion. It draws attention to the four employment guidelines adopted by the European Parliament and welcomes the fact that the objectives include promoting employment and combating poverty in the context of integration/reintegration into working life through training. It also emphasises that substantive progress towards achieving the Europe 2020 targets and objectives, in particular, in the field of employment and social affairs, is essential if the strategy is to be credible.

Oreste Rossi (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) The resolution is extremely important in that it draws attention to the key role that the European Social Fund plays in improving employment and the quality of work. It attaches great importance to education systems and vocational education and training (VET), to decent jobs, to gender equality and to ensuring that people currently excluded from the labour market can gain access to it. Unfortunately, the crisis has made it more difficult for young people to enter the labour market and caused elderly workers to lose their jobs. It is important to increase the potential of the Structural Funds to support those who may be excluded, thereby optimising the output of social policies and creating sustainable growth for the benefit of all.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The aim of the European Social Fund (ESF) is to promote employment opportunities and geographical and occupational mobility for workers in the European Union, and to facilitate industrial change and changes in production systems. To that end, vocational training and retraining are of the greatest importance, especially during a period of economic crisis and growing unemployment such as the one we are witnessing today. The aim of the ESF is to improve workers' employment opportunities and help to improve their living standards. It is therefore an

essential instrument. Job creation and the promotion of employability are a means to achieving the objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion within the Union. Synergies between the various EU policies should be encouraged in order to achieve the Europe 2020 growth and employment targets. However, I am not in favour of making the ESF a financial instrument separate from the other structural funds, with its own rules and budget. I am of the opinion that it will be easier to achieve synergies if we do not embark on that kind of sectoring of European funds, but instead focus on improving coordination among the various instruments and making more efficient use of them.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing*. – As part of the current debate on the future of cohesion policy after 2013, this resolution sets out the Parliament's commitment to ensuring that the European Social Fund remains part of the overall strategy for cohesion funding. There is, however, a need for increased flexibility and a simplification of the rules surrounding the fund. The ESF can act as the main tool in achieving the Europe 2020 strategy by focusing on skills and jobs across the EU. In order to achieve this, we need to ensure the ESF remains part of cohesion policy.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) The European Parliament has voted for a resolution on the future of the European Social Fund (ESF).

At a time when the ESF is being questioned, in particular, by the President of the Commission, who wishes to integrate it into a much larger fund with diluted objectives, the European Parliament's support of the ESF is significant.

The resolution supports the role of the ESF in EU regional and social policy and calls for the procedures for allocating funds to be simplified. Indeed, these highly restrictive procedures do not facilitate the distribution of funds in a way that is really suited to the needs of populations, and they also result in non-consumption of appropriations, particularly in France, which is a scandal in itself.

I regret, however, that the resolution revives, among other things, the dogma of 'updating education systems' and calls for these to be adapted solely to the needs of companies in order to improve access to the labour market.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The European Social Fund plays a key role in improving the employment situation and creating jobs. I support the priorities called for in the motion for a resolution of updating education systems (including expanding them to include training that is adjusted to the needs of SMEs), the promotion of decent work and, of course, gender equality by creating conditions for reconciling work and family life. Every possible effort must be made to ensure that EU policies and instruments work together in a coordinated and mutually supportive manner (paragraph 13 of the report).

President. – The minutes from this daily session will be presented to the European Parliament for approval at the start of the next part-session.

If there are no objections, the resolutions adopted at today's session will be handed over to the recipients and bodies named in them immediately.

14. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

15. Forwarding of texts adopted during the sitting: see Minutes

16. Dates of forthcoming sittings: see Minutes

17. Adjournment of the session

President. – I declare the session of the European Parliament adjourned.

(The sitting was closed at 13:25)