

THURSDAY, 24 MAY 2012

IN THE CHAIR: ANNI PODIMATA

Vice-President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting opened at 09.00)

2. Documents received: see Minutes

3. Situation in Ukraine, case of Yulia Tymoshenko (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

4. Fight against homophobia in Europe (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

5. Equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value (debate)

President. – The first item is the report by Edit Bauer, on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, on application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value (2011(2285(INI)) (A7-0160/2012).

Edit Bauer, rapporteur. – Madam President, we can all agree that the gender pay gap should be closed. The question is how?

Back on 8 March 2010, 10 young female members of the European Parliament requested a legislative initiative report on equal pay for equal work, pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure. Under this rule, Parliament may request the Commission to submit a proposal for a new act or to amend the old one. There is a new legal basis here: Article 157 of the Lisbon Treaty and the secondary legislation in force.

Directive 2006/54 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation – the so-called Recast Directive – replaced Directive 75/117 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women. Even though the deadline for transposition of the Recast Directive was in 2008, legal experts are of the opinion that only small or no profound changes have been made in Member States' legislation, and that no sanctions have been taken against employers under the directive's provisions.

There is only slow progress. The gender pay gap is currently 16.4% – varying from 4.5% up to 25.5% in individual Member States – yet legislation has been in force for almost 40 years. It is obviously not efficient.

The question is what to do with an inefficient piece of legislation? We are aware that legislation itself is not enough to tackle the issue, but experience shows that legislation can be improved and better enforced. The gender pay gap is a complex and multifaceted issue with multiple causes, including social and economic factors, such as occupational and sectoral segregation in the labour market, the undervaluing of women's work, an imbalance

between work and private life, and traditions and stereotypes such as the choice of educational paths and employment patterns, to mention only some of them. The explanations account for only half the difference: the remainder is considered as a difference caused by direct and indirect discrimination.

What is more, statistics show that the gender pay gap is apparent after women's return to the labour market following the birth of a first child, and that it grows with age, because of career breaks, but also with educational level. For these reasons, the answer has to be holistic and multi-level. It has to combine legislative and non-legislative measures, both of which are essential.

Our aim in this report was to identify those areas in legislation where improvement can be made. Since the Commission has an obligation under Article 32 of the Recast Directive to review the directive and, if appropriate, to propose amendments in 2013, we call on the Commission to address the unjust discrimination against women and to make the legislation on diminishing the gender pay gap more effective. Improvements based on the best practices of various Member States are also requested in selected areas. Equal work or work of equal value has to be regarded equally whether it is done by men or women. No excuse can be acceptable.

Janez Potočnik, *Member of the Commission.* – Madam President, it is a nice day and we start with an important topic. Gender equality is a fundamental right enshrined in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, but it is also a prerequisite for economic growth, social inclusion and well-being in our societies. The most recent figures indicate that the gender pay gap in the European Union decreased by 1.2% between 2007 and 2010, from 17.6% to 16.4%. However, the situation is very different from one Member State to another, and in some the gap is still widening.

The gender pay gap is also an expression of how our pool of well-educated and highly-skilled women is under-exploited. This is an untapped potential for the European Union economy that is needed especially at a time when human capital is the key factor for our future and for competitiveness.

With today's debate and the subsequent vote, the European Parliament will take a position on an important issue. On behalf of Vice-President Reding, I would like to thank the rapporteur, Edit Bauer, for her efforts and also for her excellent work over the last years on this issue. I would also like to thank all Members of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality for their support.

The Commission is determined to further promote gender equality. Equal pay is one of the Commission priorities set out in its strategy for equality between women and men for 2010-2015. As you know, the principle of equal pay is enshrined in the Treaty and also in Directive 2006/54/EC on equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation.

Some of our priorities for the coming years will be to monitor the correct application and enforcement of the equal pay provisions of the directive, and to support Member States and other stakeholders with a proper enforcement and application of the existing rules. The Commission plans to publish a report on the implementation of the 2006 Equal Opportunities Directive next year (2013).

In addition, enhanced transparency on the issue will be crucial in the coming years. As mentioned in your report, awareness-raising campaigns to keep employees and stakeholders informed regarding the existence and risk of the gender pay gap can play an important role. The European gender pay gap information campaign which we launched in 2009 is already a good example. This campaign has created a real partnership amongst social partners – ministries for employment, social affairs and equality, NGOs in the field of gender equality, and both private and public recruitment agencies who have acted as multipliers of the campaign messages. My colleague would like to explore this potential further in the future.

In addition, on 2 March this year we held the second European Equal Pay Day. This day is fixed each year on the date corresponding to the extra days that women are required to work in Europe in order to earn the same salary as a man during a full year of work. You might have seen advertising in national newspapers and our web clip highlighting the absurdity of pay inequalities between women and men.

As highlighted in the report, employers are key actors in tackling the gender pay gap. For this reason, the Commission has recently launched an initiative to raise companies' awareness of the gender pay gap and of its causes and consequences, and to support businesses in their efforts to tackle it. The initiative will promote training activities and support the exchange of good practices on the business case for gender equality. These activities are also open to organisations that facilitate training and dissemination of messages, such as business organisations, social partners and others. We are also following closely the pilot projects launched in some Member States.

Your report also mentions the need to improve the quality of statistics. Eurostat constantly encourages the Member States to provide their national data in a timely manner. Eurostat has recently introduced a new breakdown which should show the impact of the type of contracts, part-time in comparison to full-time, in the gender pay gap. Preliminary data are now also available on the Eurostat website. Amongst other things, the Commission is further exploring the impact of part-time work and fixed-term contracts on equal pay.

Finally, with our exchange of good practices programme on gender equality, we are working to foster closer coordination among Member States. In this framework the Commission organised in Germany in December 2011 an exchange of views on instruments to tackle the gender pay gap. Representatives from several Member States participated. I would like to thank you again for speaking up in order to address this truly important question.

Mariya Nedelcheva, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to begin by congratulating and thanking Ms Bauer for the work she has done on this report.

I shall get straight to the point. The report that we are about to adopt is not only important, but is also relevant, because it raises the issue of the discrimination suffered by women in their daily lives. In 2012, it is unacceptable that, more than half a century after we adopted a legislative framework on this matter, the average pay gap in Europe stands at 17%.

First of all, and we should not be afraid to say it, what we clearly need is strong political will at both European and national levels to ensure that this legislation is implemented. In other words, we should strive, in every possible way, to promote gender equality and respect for the rights of women, as much at legislative level as at the level of public awareness

and information, so that we can break down those gender stereotypes which continue to prevent women from fulfilling their full potential.

Secondly, Commissioner, you are quite right: we must encourage social partners to create a more inclusive wage structure to enable women to participate actively in pay negotiations. By measures such as these, we can strengthen the presence of women in senior posts and in the social partnership structure. Furthermore, when women are involved, they ensure that economic decision making includes a gender equality perspective, thus creating a virtuous circle which opens the door to greater equality.

Finally, we must enhance the mandate of equality promotion and monitoring bodies so that they can act effectively to guarantee genuine oversight of the application of the legislative framework at European and national levels.

I therefore call on all of you to vote in favour of this report because it is high time that we eliminated gender inequalities and acted on what we say and write.

Britta Thomsen, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DA) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, today we are going to vote on a very important report that could be of decisive significance for one of the major equality problems in the EU, namely the lack of equal pay between men and women. Equal pay for equal work or for work of the same value has been an abiding principle of the EU's values since the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Despite this, there still exists a pay gap of nearly 17% between men and women. By and large, there has been no progress in this area – and in some countries it is even getting worse. That is why today we are strongly urging the Commission to revise the 2006 equality directive. We are doing so because it is clear that it is not working.

There are a number of reasons for the lack of equal pay. Historically speaking, jobs typically performed by women have not been as well paid as traditionally male jobs. We also see a sharp drop in pay in professions where more than 30% of workers are women. It is as if being a woman is in itself a disqualification in the labour market.

In Portugal a survey was recently carried out in a supermarket which showed that the men in the butchery section were being paid more than the women in the fish section. The tasks that they performed were assessed as being of equal value, since the skills required to do the two types of jobs were the same. The pay gap was due entirely to the difference in gender. The solution was to give the women a pay rise and to end the sex segregation between the sections, so that now both men and women work in both sections.

This example shows why it is so important that we get a definition of what work of equal value is if we are to do anything about unequal pay. However, this requires all parties to be committed to this – commitment on the part of the EU, but also on the part of national governments, trade unions and employers. It cannot be a one-off problem when there are such clear pay gaps. It is a social problem that is down to structural and historical causes, and stereotypical ideas of men's and women's roles in the labour market. Let us break down this barrier, so that the EU can genuinely live up to the provisions of the Treaty concerning equal pay for equal work or for work of the same value – provisions that have now been in existence for more than 40 years.

Siiri Oviir, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (ET) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, we no longer live in the Middle Ages, but being born a woman still leads to injustice. We make up half – even more than half – of society, but we have nonetheless put up with this injustice. Today the issue is wage differences. Despite the profusion of

legislation over nearly forty years and measures undertaken to reduce wage differences, the wage difference between men and women remains – no significant shift has taken place. Words have not become deeds.

Here I would like to commend the rapporteur, Ms Bauer, for her determination. She was also the initiator of a similar report that was adopted in 2008. Unfortunately the Commission has not reacted in the necessary way to what is contained in this report. Today the situation has changed in a legal sense. The Treaty of Lisbon gives Parliament a stronger legal mandate, and we also intend to use that. The priority of the report is not the elimination of the horizontal wage gap. Having defined our aim as the elimination of different wages for men and women for equal or equivalent work, we have also taken a big step towards eliminating the horizontal wage gap.

In order to reach our goal, we must ensure that objective work evaluation and job classification instruments are adopted in each Member State, that regular pay audits are performed, and that their results are available to workers. Here I once again call upon my colleagues to consider whether it is legally proportional in the context of this topic to resist the disclosure of wages and bonuses by appealing to the Data Protection Act.

The members of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe are convinced of the need to implement legislation more effectively and more rapidly, and to eliminate gender inequality in wage policy. Thank you.

Franziska Katharina Brantner, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Madam President, as women, we have been campaigning for equal pay for equal work since the Treaties of Rome were signed in 1957. The wording was changed in the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1999 to ‘of equal value’, in other words the same pay for work of equal value. A very good report was presented to this House in 2008, calling on the Commission to present new legislative proposals that would finally reduce the wage gap. Nothing has happened between then and 2012, except for a number of glossy brochures from the Commission, while the wage gap still remains 17 % on average, with 21 % in Germany, a trend that is rising in some countries. I find it unacceptable for the Commission to sit back and say: we are going to publish a few more glossy brochures and launch yet another campaign. We have seen over the last 50 years that this does not work. We do not need more glossy brochures, but rather further measures, including legal measures.

There are many reasons for the wage gap. Many of these cannot be remedied at European level. Some, however, can be influenced on a Europe-wide basis and it is these that we should be pushing in order to reduce the difference in the various Member States.

The first point is transparency. However, this does not mean transparency in the sense of glossy brochures, but rather transparency in the sense of the spread of wages within businesses. Models do exist for this. In Switzerland, anonymised data in which no names are mentioned show the spread of wages within enterprises. Any business in Switzerland that fails to disclose this information will find itself excluded from bidding for public contracts. Here we have an example where it is made clear how transparency can lead to less wage inequality. We should apply this right to transparency to the whole of Europe.

My second point concerns the issue of sanctions. In various EU Member States it is still the case that the penalties a company has to pay when sued by a woman are less than its previous savings. That is absolutely the wrong incentive. What we need to tell companies

is that if they are guilty of discrimination, they will find themselves having to pay a hefty fine.

One final point: the implementation of the equal value issue. We need much better guidance and regulations if this law is to become a reality.

I hope that the Commission will not respond with just another monologue. By the way, I think it is a shame that Ms Reding is not present this morning. We do not just want a quota that will help high-flying women; we should also aim to assist all those women, who are in the majority, who suffer from unequal pay.

Andrea Češková, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – (CS) Madam President, we must also promote the principle of gender equality on the labour market. According to the latest statistics, the pay gap between men and women averages 16.4%, although it cannot be said generally that men earn more than women. It is a highly complex topic, with numerous underlying causes and reasons.

Ms Bauer's report has sent out a very good signal here. The multifaceted and multi-layered approach of Member States to this issue is important. A legislative amendment may be an important component, but experience shows that this step is not enough by itself. We must continue to pay attention to this issue, and change the deeply engrained attitudes to the question of pay, for example.

I welcome the existence of pilot projects, for example, which are good instruments for creating enhanced transparency and monitoring. It is true that this problem cannot be properly grasped without reliable statistics. We need statistical data and we need to evaluate the differences between sectors and various other factors. We must also take account of the business activities of individual firms. Imposing sanctions on firms that are not really performing well economically is, in my view, counterproductive. It is also not possible to impose sanctions on firms until we have clear rules for measuring jobs that are equal and of the same value, and until we can compare these jobs. I see the good intentions behind the development of instruments that will evaluate work objectively and thus render it comparable, but can we really find such instruments? I am rather sceptical about this, and I think it is very difficult.

A tabular evaluation based on valid classifications may be applied in the public sector, but it will be hard to dictate to private firms. When setting levels of pay and remuneration, businesses also take account of the individual contribution of each employee. We must not overlook the individual abilities and accomplishments of each employee, which cannot be measured objectively, but which currently play a substantial role in the selection of candidates and the level of their pay.

Perhaps we should focus more on aspects that create the same working conditions and preconditions for women. I would like to say that one of the main problems and causes of differences in pay is that women interrupt their careers or reduce their working hours due to the need to balance family life and child care, or professional life and child care. I am therefore pleased that this issue has become a major debate, because it enables us to draw attention to other pressing issues and aspects of these issues. I would like to thank the rapporteur for her efforts, and everyone else for their contribution. I look forward to the Commission's assessment.

Inês Cristina Zuber, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (PT) Madam President, despite the introduction of legislation, and national, EU and international guidelines, there is still

a problem of wage discrimination and it is becoming worse. Women receive 16.4% less than men in the EU, and the wage gap is increasing. This report seeks to tackle this issue once again and, although we would like to make some comments, we agree with it and believe that it is generally positive.

At present, one of the labour rights that has been under greatest attack as part of the labour reforms across Europe is the principle of collective agreement, which is one of the most important ways of protecting female workers from wage discrimination. It should therefore have been given a more prominent role within this report. Moreover, in view of the trend towards greater precariousness in labour policy, we refuse to support measures that insist on making labour relations even more flexible.

One of the aspects of this report that we value highest is the fact that it advocates sanctions for employers that do not comply with the principle of equal pay. We do not, however, take the view that employers discriminate against women in terms of pay because they are ignorant of equality, or because they are absent-minded. When an employer has a policy of discriminating against women, it is rational, intentional and deliberate. The higher the level of wage discrimination, the lower women's pay, and the higher the profits of the employers. Only by applying sanctions that are more expensive for the employers than getting rid of wage discrimination can they be deterred from this illegal practice.

Finally, we cannot neglect to say that so-called austerity policies will not help to realise the right to equal pay, as they destroy jobs and reduce wages, thereby putting enormous pressure on workers to accept low wages; rather, they will merely sideline, trivialise and destroy equal pay altogether.

Gabriele Zimmer, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*. – (DE) Madam President, on behalf of my Committee, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, I would like to underline that, during our work on the draft, we were very critical of the fact that since 2008 all the Commission has presented is a study of changes to the situation as regards unequal pay for men and women and that we are very dissatisfied with this situation and refuse to accept it. Despite the formal equality of men and women, material equality is still very far off. The figures we have heard mentioned and the figures previously provided by the Commission should also be questioned by us, as even the slight decrease is mainly the result of different figures or changes in statistics, in particular with reference to the situation in Poland, where no such data existed in the past. Accordingly, this situation should be investigated once again.

We would point out that equal pay will remain an illusion in future too if the causes of wage inequality, such as discrimination, the segregation of the labour market and a lack of child care, are not remedied. We wish to see this anchored in the Bauer report in particular. Accordingly we, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, support the Bauer report and hope that we will adopt it in Parliament today.

Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, equal pay for women and men for the same work is a goal that we must finally achieve in order to place women and men on an equal footing in the labour market, to reduce poverty among retired women and to reflect social justice. This is particularly important because the pay gap widens during the most difficult times in women's lives – when they are raising young children and when they are approaching retirement. I am glad to see that the Bauer report lists good practices which are currently followed in certain countries, since recognition of these practices at European level will help to make them more widespread. What is more, the

report contains a list of recommendations aimed at improving legislation on pay inequality. I am referring here to the provision which calls on the European Commission to provide a better definition of direct and indirect discrimination and the pay gap when revising the directive.

It is also extremely significant that the report calls on employers to ensure greater transparency on pay, at the same time as complying with provisions on personal data protection. It is also vital that the Member States should be obliged to introduce penalties for employers who do not observe equal pay rules, in the form of compensation for workers who have suffered discrimination, and also administrative fines and ineligibility for public funding. I hope as well that by 2013 the European Commission will be able to justify the poor outcomes achieved for the directive's provisions on equal treatment for women and men in respect of pay, and that it will propose concrete measures which take account of Parliament's recommendations.

Iratxe García Pérez (S&D). –(ES) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, unfortunately, this is not the first time we have dealt with the issue of the gender pay gap in this House. Unfortunately, we are talking about a figure that remains stable and which we are incapable of lowering, and we are also talking about the fact that we live in an unequal society where women do not start out on an equal footing in the labour market and many other areas.

I therefore believe that we must now once again reiterate, repeat and demand that all the European institutions implement the necessary measures to put an end to a situation which should be very difficult for any of us to explain.

In my view, this report refers to the fundamental issues of why women earn less: their careers are interrupted when starting a new job or having to combine family life and working life, and there are categories in which women are under-represented.

There is another vital issue I think we should bear in mind and address openly. If Parliament votes today in favour of instruments such as the role of social partners and collective agreements, we will not be able to allow governments, such as the government of Spain, to use labour reform as a way of abolishing employment legislation and the rights of all workers.

Therefore, we cannot allow this crisis and these conservative governments to further worsen women's situation in the labour market.

Antonia Parvanova (ALDE). – Madam President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, I very much welcome the report on equal pay for male and female workers and would like to congratulate Mrs Bauer for the great work accomplished. Despite having extensive equal pay legislation for over fifty years, the gender pay gap has only marginally reduced, and this provides a clear indication that legislation needs to be improved with a view to eradicating the still existing stereotypes about the role of women in the labour market. These stereotypes contribute to occupational segregation, the undervaluing of women's work and the rising phenomenon of poverty among women.

Also, in order to achieve tangible results, it is of the utmost important to support concrete policy initiatives which improve wage transparency, impose stricter sanctions on employers for non-compliance with equal pay legislation, and empower those suffering from wage discrimination to take their cases to court and seek a remedy.

It is high time we took action to achieve concrete results in practice, and not only on paper, by addressing one of the most persistent and rigid problems in the field of gender equality.

Ana Miranda (Verts/ALE). – (PT) Madam President, Commissioner, congratulations to the rapporteur. Equal pay for equal work is what many European women want, and is vital to ensuring dignity and social justice. The goal of equal pay cannot be achieved as long as direct and indirect discrimination still exist. The goal of parity cannot be achieved as long as there is still a segregated labour market and an imbalance between private and professional life. Although statistics are thin on the ground, there is evidence: a proven 17% difference. We need positive legislative and educational measures, along with sanctions for collective redress and legal action to identify publicly companies that fail to comply. Women are hardest hit by the crisis and, as my colleague said, their situation is being exacerbated by many conservative governments. We should combat this state of affairs using a large number of legislative measures.

Marina Yannakoudakis (ECR). – Madam President, women must have equal pay for work of equal value. Women must have equal opportunity in the workplace. Equality for all is a basic human right: there is no denying this. However, with a heavy heart, I shall be voting against this report.

I fully support the principles of equality for women in all fields, but this report calls on the Commission to legislate on equal pay and to reinforce this legislation with sanctions. The EU likes to transform noble intentions into legislation, which then becomes an albatross around the neck of businesses. Just look at the Working Time Directive or the Agency Workers' Directive. Legislation is bad for business and bad for women. It may even ultimately harm women's employment opportunities.

In the UK we have realised that change will not happen by telling companies how to run their businesses. We can close the gender pay gap only when firms themselves realise the benefits. The British Government's 'Think, Act, Report' programme is a voluntary approach to improve the transfer of pay. Initiatives such as this have proved to work well. EU legislation is not welcome in the fields of employment, pensions or social services, however good the intentions may be. The EU can play a positive role by sharing best practice.

I welcome this report and I welcome the debate, but legislation crosses a red line. I congratulate the rapporteur on her report.

Christa Klauß (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, legal provisions already exist in Europe. EU legal provisions aiming to reduce the wage gap between men and women have been in place since 1975. Nonetheless, on average women earn 16.4 % less than men at present in the EU. This raises the question: have we missed our target?

This income inequality becomes even greater when we consider pensions. As we all know, poverty among older people affects women particularly hard. The logic is simple: lower wages generate a lower pension and less valued work generates lower wages. Raising children, family and care impact on working lives, particularly among women. Yet this work is not paid in euros and cents. It is not given equal value. I would argue, however, that family and community work is more valuable to society than many a job based in an air-conditioned office. I am certain of one thing: if more men were to work in the social professions, this situation would improve. We need to continue to work for equal pay for equal work if we are serious about wanting equality between the sexes.

Ms Bauer's report is a very good way to draw attention once again to these abuses. We know that the problem of the pay differential cannot be remedied through legislation alone. Social attitudes need to change and we need to abandon the long outdated life patterns associated with men and women. We need to draw attention again and again to this issue. Employers, employees and citizens should be made more aware of this problem. Simply awarding a prize to employers is not going to change this situation.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D). – (PL) Madam President, workers must receive the same pay for the same work. Unequal pay cannot be tolerated on any basis, including race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion or gender. Although women are statistically more likely to have a higher level of education and thus be better qualified, they earn less than men, and the more senior the job, the greater the discrepancy. Equal rights and pay for women continue to be an illusory concept. Women are discriminated against primarily because they want to have or already have children.

Poland has some of the worst indicators in Europe for early years child care, and yet no investments are being made in nurseries or pre-schools. The retirement age for women is being extended by seven years, and yet no new jobs are being created at the same time. It is already almost impossible for women over 50 to find work. Unless women and men start to earn the same, extending the retirement age will lead to greater imbalances between the living situations of women and men. Pay inequality has a negative impact on women's pensions, and is one of the causes of poverty among older women. As many as 21% of women over 65 are at risk of poverty, whereas the figure for men is only 16%. The suggestions in the report are therefore extremely important, and it is essential to put them into practice effectively so that we can all enjoy equal rights.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). – (RO) Madam President, although we celebrate Equal Pay Day as of 5 March 2011, for the last fifty years we have not done anything else but play, failing to make progress in this field. I wish to congratulate Ms Edit Bauer for her report. It is an accurate and detailed description of equal opportunities in the European Union. Equal opportunities cannot exist in the European Union in the absence of equal pay.

I do not know whether we still need to improve the legislation or adopt other legislation, but I would like to know from the Commission how we abide by existing legislation, given that Directives 2004/17/EC and 2004/18/EC forbid companies that do not ensure equal opportunities to participate in public tenders, get European funding, and take part in subsidies and public procurement procedures.

Has anyone ever asked any Member State if it complied with these criteria in the three areas? Has the Commission ever checked whether companies in Member States have received European funding or participated in public tenders without meeting the requirement of equal pay? Certainly not; therefore, I believe the only solution for ensuring the viability and implementation of this principle, which is a principle of honour for us all, is to strictly abide by the existing legislation, and try to find mechanisms and levers that enable us to control its enforcement.

Marije Cornelissen (Verts/ALE). – (NL) Madam President, 55 years ago, equal pay for men and women was established as the first fundamental right in the European Union. Now, 55 years down the line, the pay gap continues to be unacceptably wide. So there must be something we are not doing right, you would think.

A fundamental right in itself is not enough to change our current practices. For example, employers should allow a lot more transparency around salaries, so that women know if they earn less than their male colleagues. Salaries should be dependent on responsibilities and skills and not on how hard you negotiate or whether you are playing golf with your boss. Workforce inspectorates should check pay gaps much more rigorously. And 55 years down the line, it is high time that we, as the European Union, make sure that equal pay becomes a reality.

I would like to hear from the Commission when it intends to respond to this.

David Campbell Bannerman (ECR). – Madam President, I am very much in favour of equal work for equal value and of fair treatment, but the issue here is: who enforces that? We do not need the EU to dictate to sovereign nations yet more top-down equalities legislation in yet another power grab. Pay should not be set at the EU level. With the state of the European economies at present, this enforcement really does not help – it is like tying weights to someone who is already drowning.

Already the engine of our economies – small businesses – are suffering from too many unnecessary, costly and over-the-top regulations, such as the disgraceful, out-of-control UK employment tribunal system, where 90% of those laws come from the EU and which really acts as licensed blackmail. Thankfully, the UK Government is cutting that back. But business really does not need this – not when one in five young people in the EU are out of work and when the EU share of GDP wealth is falling so alarmingly. We have to ensure that all intervention is constructive; this is not. Then there is the EU's Equality Directive, which was dressed up as Harriet Harman's Equality Act. Civitas actually estimated that that directive alone cost GBP 150 million in the service sector and 210 million across SMEs, across the UK. It is too much.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (PPE), *Blue-card question.* – (PL) Madam President, I should like to ask whether Mr Bannerman believes that it is a bad idea to introduce standards of equality and anti-discriminatory measures in the European Union because it would be too expensive for both the state and for businesses, and, if so, what does he mean by this? Does he mean that we should keep pay unequal in order to make businesses more profitable? Thank you.

David Campbell Bannerman (ECR), *Blue-card answer.* – Ms Kolarska-Bobińska, no, absolutely not. I do compliment the report. As I said quite clearly, I am in favour of equal pay for equal work. That principle is very important. What I query is whether this should be done at EU level. I do not believe it should be; it should be for nation states. However, I absolutely agree with you on the principle. It is the intervention at EU level, the heavy costs of that and the power of the EU over sovereign states that I object to.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (PPE), *blue-card question.* – (FR) Madam President, as we are talking of economic returns in relation to pay equality, I have a question for you: the Member States invest as much in the training of girls as they do in that of boys; it seems to me that, if we followed your argument to its logical conclusion, that has to be a rather poor investment, has it not? That is not a view I share. On the contrary, I believe that we must encourage women's work and value it.

David Campbell Bannerman (ECR), *Blue-card answer.* – Ms Morin-Chartier, I agree with that. I accept in this report that career breaks actually cause a lot of loss of income and affect this. As I say, I am very much in favour in the thrust of it. What I am saying is that this should be down to nation states to do and should not be enforced – which this legislation associated with a good report does. That is the problem. It is not the report, because that is a very good report in many respects. It is the legislation, done top-down from the EU, which I object to. The great thrust of it is very good, but it should be done through nation states.

Mikael Gustafsson (GUE/NGL). – (SV) Madam President, I would like to thank Ms Bauer for this report, which attempts to tackle the significant pay gap between women and men. There is clearly a need for a great many different measures to overcome this problem, but I would like to look at the situation from just one perspective.

The basis for achieving equal pay levels lies in a well-developed public sector with a good social infrastructure, including child care and homes for the elderly, which will make it much easier for women to establish themselves in the labour market and give them the same opportunities for full-time work as men. Shared parental leave is another important measure, because we know that women currently stay at home with children to a much greater extent than men do. This can mean that employers regard women as more unreliable employees which, of course, leads to smaller pay rises and poorer working conditions.

In order to prevent wage discrimination, we must bring an end to cuts and privatisation in the public sector and allow men to have a larger share of parental leave.

Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, first of all, I should like to thank Ms Bauer for her work, which I fully support. However, secondly, and this request is for you, Commissioner, could you tell Ms Reding that our patience is running out?

Today we are in a position where the Charter of Fundamental Rights is being blatantly violated by pay inequalities which trouble no one. I was upset by hearing you say that things had got better because the gap had been reduced from 17.5% to 16.4%. I was upset because I truly believe that Europe has a crucial role to play in showing the Member States the way forward. We must of course respect the equality of citizens before the law; that is a fundamental right and we must ensure it is respected. However, over and above this, what we want is transparency, transparency so that everyone is aware of the real pay gap that exists in our society. The public sector should set an example. SMEs too clearly have a role to play, as does the private sector, but the public sector must also set an example. That is why, when Ms Bauer calls for encouragement and also for sanctions, I think we should support any future legal appeals that women bring against pay disparities.

The Member States clearly need to be coerced, private business clearly needs to be coerced, but we also need to coerce the public sector, and we must adopt every possible measure, as Mr Gustafsson said just now, to ensure that women benefit from the pay equality that is achieved. We have had enough. We want growth and, for there to be growth, we need women.

Silvia Costa (S&D). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank the rapporteur for her work. Fifty-five years on from Article 119 of the Treaty and after Article 157 of the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, the average pay gap in Europe is still 16.5%, demonstrating that a more comprehensive approach should be attempted, as the report itself advocates.

In my view, the nine key issues identified in the report provide a sound basis for amending the 2006 directive, which Parliament is asking the Commission to review by February 2013, with the inclusion of both legislative and non-legislative measures. I would remind the previous speaker that the legal basis is Article 157, which provides that Parliament and the Council can act through the ordinary legislative procedure, in conjunction with the Commission, to introduce measures to ensure that the Member States implement equality measures.

In particular, I must stress the need for transparency in defining work of equal value, which should be based on a job classification system that takes into account professionalism, skill and responsibility. Statistics should be made comparable – which is not the case at the moment – and there should be effective monitoring bodies to which appeals can be addressed, as well as more effective sanctions.

Additionally, in terms of pay evaluation, greater transparency is needed in the wage or salary component, which is generally equal compared with the other components, such as benefits, allowances or deductions, in which the gap tends to be greater. That is shown by the fact that the higher women climb in their professions, the greater the pay gap becomes. We should therefore focus on that aspect, together, of course, with the need to reconcile work and family life and the need for training opportunities, not to mention raising the profile of part-time work in relation to the ability to pursue a career, a factor that penalises women to this day.

Julie Girling (ECR). – Madam President, equal pay for work of equal value is not an issue which divides us; it is an issue of basic equal opportunities and equal rights. We are united in promoting it. However, we have to be pragmatic about how we deal with it.

In my many years of business experience I have been involved with this issue many times. It is not a straightforward case of proclaiming a principle. Painstaking work to benchmark equal value must take place and it comes with a cost. I believe society must be prepared to pay that cost. My problem here is not the principle involved, but the issue of EU legislation. I do not believe that EU legislation will add value.

Where companies are failing to follow national legislation, why do we believe that they will react any more favourably to the heavy hand of the Commission? As MEPs, we frequently find ourselves bemoaning the failure of Member States to enforce EU legislation. I look around this Chamber at the intelligent, powerful and impressive women engaged in this issue. Let us not waste our energies denouncing Conservative governments, and concentrate on working in our Member States to get legislation which works.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Zofija Mazej Kukovič (PPE), *Blue-card question.* – (SL) Ms Girling, I have a question for you.

What, according to your proposal, can politics do to enable a woman to be a wife, a mother and have a career at the same time?

Julie Girling (ECR), *blue-card answer.* – I do not suppose that there is any realistic expectation that I will spend the next three hours going through an answer to that. If I concentrate on this issue of equal pay, let me simply say that the point that I made here – and I do not know if people are wilfully trying to misunderstand it – is not that I do not think that equal pay for equal value will improve women's rights or women's workplace

conditions. Of course I do. I made that point and I have been involved in it all my working life. What I think, though, is that the Commission will not add to that by legislating. It will not help. We need to make sure that our Member States subscribe to it and put it into practice.

Kartika Tamara Liotard (GUE/NGL). – (NL) Madam President, allow me to welcome the Commissioner. Ms Bauer, thank you very much for your report. According to recent data, women continue to earn 16.4% less than men for equal work in the EU and, yet, we have had 40 years of legislation designed to reduce that gap. However, the gap seems to be widening in some Member States. Even in a supposedly emancipated country such as the Netherlands, the average pay gap is above the EU average.

This pay gap does not constitute a disadvantage only in the period during which women are in work; because of it, we are also contributing a lot less to our pensions. As many as 22% of all women have an income at a level around the poverty threshold when they reach 65. Now, on top of that, the EU with its inhumane pensions plans wants to dismantle the state pension and the number of older women who will get into difficulty will only increase.

We must act now. We need equal pay for men and women and we need to scrap pension plans that make things worse for women. This is the only way we will achieve a fair standard of living for everyone: old and young, male and female.

Anna Záborská (PPE). – (SK) Madam President, I would like to thank Ms Bauer for her tireless efforts to change the status of women in this issue. The problem of unequal pay has persisted for a number of decades because neither the Commission nor the Member States have grasped it correctly. Their understanding is based on an incomplete answer to the fundamental question of why exactly it is that women earn less than men, even in comparable positions. If the reason for this was merely a widespread prejudice that women workers are less productive than men, the solution would be the introduction of financial penalties and stricter controls of employers. However, this is not the case – the problem is more complex than that. The real reason is that most women have two jobs: one with their employer, and one with their family. Involving the husband in housework is not a perfect solution. Nor should the answer to this natural situation be pressure on the woman to give up her maternal responsibilities and transfer them to the state. Rather, we should think whether, by any chance, today's unpaid work carried out by women as mothers is not of greater value to society than if they were tractor drivers or managers acting in their jobs as men where required by the situation, prioritising work over all else, knowing that, from infancy, their children will be brought up by complete strangers.

Antigoni Papadopoulou (S&D). – (EL) Madam President, my congratulations to Ms Bauer on her detailed report. The need for action to close the pay gap between men and women is a perennial complaint and, at the same time, a sad story. The pay gap remains. It ranges from 4 % to 27.6 % in the Member States of the European Union. On average, women are paid 16.4 % less than men. Progress is slow and negligible.

As, basically, pay inequalities are the result of discrimination and stereotyping, we need social initiatives at national, local and, most importantly, European level, a change of attitude and effective measures in both the public and private sectors and measures to reconcile family and work. I support the idea of a European strategy to address this gap, with the European Union taking a leading role in coordinating policies, promoting best practices and involving various social operators.

I call on the Commission to take initiatives immediately and to revise the current legislation, based on the resolution, by February 2013, with the emphasis on penalties for infringements.

Roberta Angelilli (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, I would particularly like to thank Ms Bauer for the excellent work she has done. Commissioner, we have to work with the Member States to establish a clear road map for eliminating the gender pay gap. We need concrete, measurable legislative commitments that can monitor the progress made or reveal the sticking points.

In my view, the Member States should be further supervised in this undertaking by the Commission, usefully supported by Eurostat, not least so we can find out what works and what does not work, and disseminate and share good practice. This will start a virtuous circle in terms of culture and mentality both in the world of work and more generally in society at large.

We now need to transform these proposals into concrete measures, by strengthening the legislation in force and equipping it with sanctions, which must of course be effective and proportional while acting as a deterrent, and introducing continuous, compulsory monitoring of staff recruitment, pay and the right to take maternity leave without the risk of dismissal.

Marita Ulvskog (S&D). – (SV) Madam President, Mr Potočnik, the most important factor in all areas of pay determination is free and powerful trade unions which are not obstructed by the Posting of Workers Directive or other EU regulations. At the same time, political values and decisions are what define the social climate that forms the background for wage negotiations. It is important that the principle of equal pay for equal work was introduced in the Member States 50 years ago. However, the pay gap between women and men, for example, remains at around 16% to 17%. In some areas, the differences in pay for women and men have even increased. This would seem to indicate that the directive on equal treatment for men and women has turned into a paper tiger.

Everyone agrees that we need to combat unfair pay differences between women and men, but very few concrete measures are being taken. This may be because the causes of the problem are so complex. Discrimination involves a number of different factors, including social issues, undervaluing women's work, inequality in the work-life balance, traditions and stereotypes.

For this reason, the Member States must invest in social services, such as child care, care for the elderly and parental leave for both mothers and fathers. The EU should be able to help ensure that progress is made in this area.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – (GA) Madam President, firstly it is a pity that more men are not taking part in this debate. Be that as it may, I must say that it surprised and disgusted me to read about the salary differences between men and women for the same work. Women receive 17.5% less salary for the same work. That is not right at all and we must put an end to that bias.

But it is not only in salaries that the bias is visible: a couple of weeks ago we discussed the dearth of women on the boards of companies. And even if you look at universities – and you would think that they would be on the side of freedom and so forth – 60% of students are women, but they only get 18% of the bigger jobs. Therefore it is clear that there is bias in every aspect of life, and we must put an end to that bias.

Specifically there are three areas we should concentrate on: (1) enforcing gender equality legislation; (2) introducing quotas, even as an interim measure, where there is under-representation of women; and (3) introducing more specific policies and more generous policies in relation to child care, maternity leave, and reconciling work and personal life.

Frédéric Daerden (S&D). – (FR) Madam President, I want to begin by congratulating the rapporteur on her report.

In 1966, a strike broke out in Herstal, the town of which I am mayor. This strike went on to make history: 3 000 women working at the National Arms factory went out on strike for 11 weeks. These workers were simply calling for the application of the Treaty of Rome, which provided for equal pay for men and women for the same work. That is the famous principle of ‘equal pay for equal work’. That was the first time that this slogan had been used by civil society.

Forty-six years later, equal pay remains a topical issue. At the present time, in the European Union, women continue to earn 16 to 17% less than men, a figure re-confirmed by the Organisation of Economic and Social Development (OECD) quite recently. This state of affairs is all the more unacceptable insofar as there is a legal framework which expressly includes the principle of pay equality, due to the greater risk of poverty as a direct effect of pay inequality.

We must strengthen wage transparency, broaden women’s career prospects, enable them to play a more active part in decision making at all levels in the economic sector, and also encourage those businesses which take steps to encourage pay equality. These are just some of the measures which could allow us to tackle the pay gap, which also affects pensions. These are some of the matters that I raised through amendments and that I have been pleased to find in the report.

I hope that with this report and the initiatives that the Commission is due to take by strengthening the legislative framework, particularly in relation to the importance of collective bargaining and the sanctions system, people will no longer need to resort to social confrontation, as happened in Herstal in 1966, to advance this cause in Europe.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, first of all, I should like to congratulate Ms Edit Bauer for her report and for the balanced views she takes every time we approach such a topic. Equal work should receive equal pay, regardless of gender. Gender pay gaps persist in too many countries and they must be tackled. I believe that by focusing on wage transparency, the approach of the report in this respect is the right one. From this perspective, additional measures are required, including at Member States level, as proposed in Articles 20 and 21.

At the same time, I believe additional attention should be paid to the use of civil, administrative and legal mechanisms in order to tackle pay gaps, but women themselves play an important role in this process. If they feel they are discriminated against, that they receive lower wages than their male colleagues, they should refer the matter to the competent bodies and, in some cases, to court.

I have always maintained that women should fight first of all for their rights and to obtain what they are entitled to. The same principle applies equally to women representation in politics and management positions in companies and with regard to pay gaps. If women show that they are not only capable and competent, but also aware of their rights and

determined to defend them, no employer will ever offer them wages that are inferior to the work they put in.

Barbara Matera (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the gender pay gap still has a major effect on workers in the European Union. Women today still earn 17.1% less than men for the same work. That figure is both alarming and unacceptable in the European Union, which rates itself as the world leader in the fight against discrimination and in respect for fundamental rights.

This gap causes countless women workers in the EU great difficulty in their professional and personal development. I am also referring to the difficulty facing women in returning to work after having children, which results in gender differentials as well as a pension gap.

I therefore congratulate Ms Bauer on having tackled this serious form of discrimination by identifying concrete measures to solve the problem, given that the percentage pay gap has remained constant year after year. As a great many of my fellow Members have remarked, we have been struggling to eliminate this problem for 50 years now.

There should be mandatory pay monitoring in companies, and workers should be informed of their rights. When negotiating their employment contracts, women should be given appropriate information and assistance in order to assert their rights. I therefore support the national and local equality promotion and monitoring bodies, which should be given legal powers.

We cannot remain indifferent to this kind of discrimination against women, which has direct consequences for society and the economy and hinders the creation of future businesses.

‘Catch-the-eye’ procedure

Iosif Matula (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, gender pay gap goes as far back as school years, when girls are rather guided towards humanities, unlike boys, who focus on scientific studies. As a result, women not only end up being paid less in their profession, but they also choose specific professions which are traditionally less paid.

This is an offensive inequality in our century, when we are talking about integrating minorities of all kinds; yet, we do not ensure fair treatment to 50% of the population, not to mention the discrimination based on maternity. There are still employers who condition employment on a commitment not to conceive for a number of years after employment. What should worry us is the poverty risk arising from these practices, which is a phenomenon that may stigmatise generations of children.

Anna Hedh (S&D). – (SV) Madam President, there are currently more women than men in Europe and yet women are not valued as highly as men. How can this be possible in 2012? How can it be that we are once again asking for something which was enshrined in a treaty more than 40 years ago? How can it be that a man who does a typical woman's job is often paid more than a woman, while a woman who does a typical man's job is paid less than a man? How can it be that the Member States have not succeeded in introducing equal pay for equal work despite their equality laws?

My answer to these questions is perhaps a controversial one: it is down to men. Men in positions of power must take action. Men must become accountable and share the wage pool with women. Men must take equal responsibility for the home and for children. Look

around you and see how many men are taking part in this debate. We will never have equality unless men and women are fighting for it side by side.

(Applause)

Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, the European Commission is currently discussing parity for corporate boards. This is to be welcomed, since there are very few women on such boards, but how can the Commission and Parliament be regarded as credible institutions when we have failed for decades to solve the problem of the pay gap? It is very difficult to draft a new policy when we cannot enforce the outcome of our discussions over many, many years. I therefore very much welcome the fact that this report emphasises monitoring and cooperation not only at Commission level, but primarily at the level of all the Member States and representatives for women's rights, gender equality and non-discrimination in the individual Member States, and also at company level. I believe that something which is key at the lowest level is public scrutiny entailing the participation of trade unions, and this is something new which the report introduces. Trade unions should work to prevent pay discrimination instead of merely interfering in politics the whole time.

Sergio Gaetano Cofferati (S&D). – (IT) Madam President, if, after 55 years, discrimination is still the huge problem that we have described, it means that the policies adopted to date have not been effective enough.

That is why I believe it is vital to introduce the innovative elements presented in the report; above all, however, we must strengthen the system of incentives for good practice and sanctions for acts of discrimination. With regard to sanctions, all that is needed is to prevent companies that do not respect equality from bidding for public contracts, for example.

I would also like to point out another important and worrying element, which has already been mentioned but perhaps deserves greater attention. All European countries are changing their social security arrangements from a 'pay-as-you-go' system to a 'funded' system. Any interruption in a woman's career or any wage discrimination becomes a penalty that she will carry with her for the rest of her life.

That is why the problem we are facing deserves our greatest attention, so that we do not put women at risk of poverty at an age when they would have no other means of protecting themselves.

Romana Jordan (PPE). – (SL) Madam President, in terms of pay, today is 24 May for men and, yet, only 30 April for women. This is of course unacceptable, an unacceptable difference. Why is this happening? Are women less educated? No. In all the Member States, there are more women with a tertiary education than men. Even if we look at university education, there are 145 women with a university degree for every 100 men with a university degree.

So what is the reason for this gap? Is the reason that women work less? No, that is not the reason either. According to a survey done for Slovenia, men have an average of 27 hours of free time a week while women have 21.

Solutions do exist, so we cannot say that there is no solution. Ms Bauer has addressed this issue in a very systematic fashion and spelled out the solutions in her report. In my opinion, this is a bit too detailed for Europe as it introduces too much administration. We need to focus on the essence.

Having said that, this offers us gender-neutral legislation and payment systems; it is legislation which clearly prohibits discrimination and which provides for supervision and sanctions in the event of a breach.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D). – (SK) Madam President, despite the fact that various steps are constantly being taken and funds are being spent to eliminate the pay gap, we are only making extremely slow progress. It is unbelievable that, even today, this gap is almost 28% in some EU Member States and, moreover, that it is still widening in many countries. This year, for example, women had to work until 2 March on average in order to earn as much as men had earned on average in the calendar year up to 31 December. Incredibly, this is more than two months. These differences arise from direct and indirect discrimination and from many other factors. However, we need to improve and simplify the procedures and mechanisms that defend the principle of equal pay for equal work, and prohibit any form of gender discrimination. The Commission should also review Directive 54 of 2006, in particular because it does not lay down any penalties for employers. Also, Member States should aim to make pay more transparent. Commissioner, women are among the sections of society worst affected by insecure employment and the consequences of the economic and social crisis. I would therefore be delighted if the Commission adopted, as quickly as possible, measures to eliminate such discrimination.

Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (PPE). – (HU) Madam President, it is quite incredible that in 2012, over 60 years after the birth of European integration and 55 years after the principle of equal pay for equal work was set down, after several wars, and after economic crises past and present there still is a 16 per cent pay gap between male and female employees.

The Bauer report is excellent. It thoroughly examines problematic issues such as job classification, social dialogue, potential sanctions and, what I am particularly pleased about, the inclusion of collective redress.

I am convinced that publicity and increased transparency can serve to significantly reduce the pay gap. What I am thinking about here, Commissioner, is quite simply that statistical analysis of the pay gap should be made part of companies' annual reports, thus soliciting the assistance of publicity to eliminate that gap. I congratulate the rapporteur and support this report.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE). – (ES) Madam President, I think things are clear. Equal pay is not merely a goal, and it is not just a goal for the Member States but clearly for the whole European Union. It is stated in the Treaties.

Many legal, judicial, supervisory, sanctioning and educational measures have been proposed, and they are in the report. We cannot tackle the pay gap if we do not address another gap, which is the shared responsibility men have in their private lives as well.

We cannot address the gap in the public sphere if we do not also organise society so that we men take on our responsibilities in our private lives and thereby guarantee that women can have access to a public and working life on the same terms. This aspect is crucial if we truly want to implement these measures from a political, legal and sanctioning standpoint. This is a preliminary measure, but it goes hand in hand with this debate.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) Madam President, it is sad that, even after many years of efforts made by the European Parliament, there is still discrimination in many EU States against the fairer sex in employment relations. The fact that employees should receive the same pay for the same work regardless of age, race or gender is, it seems, still unknown to

many employers. It is therefore right to continue to seek effective mechanisms that will help eliminate unjustified differences in pay between men and women. However, it has long been agreed that imposing excessive administrative burdens on small and medium-sized enterprises in the EU is tantamount to bullying. I would therefore like to propose that we refrain from using this report to impose further administrative obligations on small and medium-sized enterprises, and that we transfer responsibility for the fulfilment of the measures proposed in point 2.3 of *Analysis of the situation and transparency of results* to the state institutions, tax authorities and social insurance agencies, which should now have all necessary data on the wage policies of employers and employment contracts of their employees.

End of the 'catch-the-eye' procedure

Janez Potočnik, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I would like to thank all the speakers for their contributions. I can assure you that they will be noted, including the more critical comments.

The gender pay gap is a complex phenomenon and goes far beyond the issue of equal pay for equal work. As you know, and as illustrated by the life-cycle approach to the problem, there are various factors that can explain this inequality between women and men. In addition to undervaluation and horizontal segregation, women and men's choices of studies and careers are often influenced by traditional stereotypes. This leads to gender segregation in labour markets, where female-dominated occupations are undervalued; to vertical segregation, whereby it is more difficult for women in the labour market to reach higher positions; to inequality in the burden of caring, or, as one speaker rightly put it, different private-public alignment of lives; and, indeed, to direct discrimination within the same job.

The consequences are lower pensions and, as was mentioned, a higher risk of poverty for women than for men. Obviously, this should not be acceptable in the 21st century, at least not in Europe. So the problem deserves all our attention, and I agree with the rapporteur, Ms Bauer, that we need a holistic, multi-level approach. Yes, we need legislation, but we also need implementation of the legislation. Yes, we need public awareness campaigns, best-practice sharing, better statistics, better information and more research. We are working in all these areas and we need the efforts of all the stakeholders to achieve solutions.

Let me reiterate that the Commission intends to present a report to Parliament on the application of the 2006 directive, reviewing the operation of that directive with a specific focus on the application of the principle of equal pay in practice. Obviously, this will be informative for future steps.

The Commission is constantly monitoring whether the existing legal framework is being correctly applied in practice at national level. It is our job to do this for all types of legislation, and it includes considering whether Member States are applying the appropriate sanctions as required by the directive. We are also preparing a study assessing several legislative and non-legislative actions to tackle the gender pay gap, and that will feed into the implementation report on the 2006 directive. It is scheduled to be published in 2013 but the exact date of publication has not yet been determined.

I would also like to mention, in answer to some of your questions about the introduction of quotas for women on company boards, that the public consultation on this issue is

currently running until the end of May. The results of the consultation will then feed into the decision on whether to introduce legislation.

To conclude: the Bauer report sends clear and important signals, and the Commission appreciates the support of this House in tackling this challenging issue. We all agree that equal pay is no longer just a matter of fairness: it is also a necessary condition from an economic point of view. The Commission counts on the support of the European Parliament to make further progress and successfully tackle the gender pay gap.

Edit Bauer, *rapporteur.* – (HU) Madam President, I would like to thank the speakers for their valuable input, as well as the shadow rapporteurs for their active contribution.

Please allow me to address some of the comments. Thank you very much, Commissioner, for pointing out that the issue of the pay gap is also related to economic growth, and I would like to stress that even in 1957, equal pay was included in the Treaty of Rome not in the context of equal opportunities or human rights but as an expression of equal conditions for economic competition.

Beyond that, however, this is not just an economic issue, not just a social issue and not primarily an issue of human rights, but one that has, in fact, a very far-reaching consequence which I also attempted to point out in the report, namely that the first major difference arises after the birth of the first child. Even though these days we are concerned day in and day out with the economic crisis, we rarely mention that Europe also suffers from a deep demographic crisis.

What kind of message are we sending if the law addressing the pay gap, which has been in effect for fifty years, is not working? I can understand the scepticism of the conservative Members, but the main issue here is that we have a law more than forty years old and a basic principle more than fifty years old, which are not working. It is evident that they are not working.

Even though all actors have their own responsibilities in this field, it is our task to look at what can be done in terms of legislation. I believe that we cannot evade addressing this issue here.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 24 May, at 12.00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Zuzana Brzobohatá (S&D), *in writing.* – (CS) Women always receive less pay than men for doing equal work and with equal qualifications, regardless of their education. In the EU, there is an average pay gap of about 17.5%. The situation in the Czech Republic is much worse, with women receiving 19% less pay than men in 2010, according to the Czech Statistical Office. The greatest differences were found in people who had completed secondary school without the relevant qualifications, and in university graduates with a masters degree or higher, where women earned up to 27.5% less than men. Equal pay for equal work was already enshrined in the Treaties in 1957. I welcome the fact that Parliament is aware that, 60 years after the establishment of that legislation, this issue still remains to be resolved. The stereotypes about so-called male and female jobs still persist. Possible solutions are available even in primary schools, where we should work to eliminate prejudices and encourage children's talents regardless of their gender. For example, girls should be given more encouragement to take up technical professions or boys to work in

social services. I do not believe that women should work as miners whatever the cost, or that men, on the other hand, should work as nannies, but I do find it unacceptable that there should be any difference in average pay in professions that can be performed equally well by both sexes – and these account for the vast majority.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), *in writing.* – According to the latest provisional, although incomplete, figures, women across the EU earn on average 16.4% less than men for work of equal value. The gender pay gap varies between 4.4% and 27.6% among EU Members, and progress to reducing the disparity is extremely slow. (At EU level, the pay gap fell by only 1.3% between 2006 and 2010.) According to preliminary experts' studies, the recast Directive 2006/54/EC contributed to the improvement of women's situation at the European labour market, but it has not profoundly changed existing legislation on closing the gender wage disparity in Member States. Parliament has repeatedly called on the Commission to take more initiatives to tackle these issues, including revision of current legislation, but so far the Commission's actions have not yielded desirable results in this matter. This current report sends another reminder to the Commission to reinforce existing legislation. It also calls on the Commission to introduce and apply appropriate sanctions on Member States if they fail to comply with the required legislation. Bridging the gender pay disparity will not only benefit our economy but will also have a great impact on our society, which must value men and women equally.

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Equal pay for men and women is still clearly a problem. We must not lose sight of it. The fact that women need to work on average until 2 March 2012 in order to earn as much as men had earned by the end of 2011 is not acceptable. We need to be more aware of this. Pay scales must be more transparent. Means of redress must be strengthened to allow women access to justice. Finally, sanctions must be stepped up against employers who fail to respect the principle of equal pay for men and women.

Jutta Steinruck (S&D), *in writing.* – (DE) 2007 was the 'European Year of Equal Opportunities'. Five years later and Europe is still at square one. It is true that we have established the legal principle of the same remuneration for men and women. Nonetheless, wage inequality for men and women still exists. We are making little or no progress. I am pleased, therefore, that, as well as setting targets, the rapporteur has also provided some specific, detailed recommendations in her report. We need collective redress when this principle of equal pay is violated. It must be possible to obtain prosecutions for wage discrimination. We are calling for awareness campaigns dealing with wage inequality for men and women. We need wage equality officers in the various Member States. This will enable progress in the Member States to be monitored more effectively. We need to make specific progress. In this case specific progress means pursuing legal initiatives requiring equal pay for men and women.

6. Swiss quotas on the number of residence permits granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary (debate)

President. – The next item is the oral question by Rafał Trzaskowski, Andreas Schwab, Simon Busuttil, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Elmar Brok, Csaba Óry, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Romana Jordan, Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz and Małgorzata Handzlik, on behalf of the PPE Group, Evelyne Gebhardt, Olga Sehnalová and Marek Siwiec, on behalf of the S&D Group, Jürgen Creutzmann, Robert Rochefort,

Renate Weber, Marielle de Sarnez, Marian Harkin and Baroness Sarah Ludford, on behalf of the ALDE Group, Heide Rühle, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group and Adam Bielan, on behalf of the ECR Group (O-000113/2012 - B7-0115/2012), and

the oral question by Cornelia Ernst, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group, to the Commission: Swiss quotas on the number of residence permits granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary (O-000115/2012 – B7-0116/2012).

Rafał Trzaskowski, *author.* – Madam President, first of all, I would like to thank all my colleagues who supported this resolution for showing solidarity.

This resolution was prompted by the decision of the Swiss authorities to re-establish quantitative limitations on the long-term residence permits granted to the citizens of eight Member States from eastern and central Europe. We are of the opinion that such measures are discriminatory since, according to the Commission's Legal Service, there is no basis for such a differentiation as the transitional period for the safeguards has run out.

We in this House have an allergic reaction to any attempt at differentiating between EU Member States, especially if it has no grounding in the legal framework underpinning our relationship. We differ on the interpretation of the safeguards with the Swiss authorities, but this situation actually points to the deficiency in our relations, as there is no legal guarantee that mutual legal obligations will be implemented in a uniform manner.

We are of the opinion that the labour force coming from the EU has contributed to the growth of the Swiss economy, and this is actually confirmed by Swiss farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises. If that is indeed the case, there is no justification for using the safeguards, regardless of the interpretation of the protocol.

Let me stress that we do not want to be paternalistic towards our Swiss partners. I was rapporteur on how Switzerland and the other EEA countries cope with the internal market. We have shown an enormous degree of understanding of the sensitivities of our partners in the Swiss Confederation and engaged in a very positive dialogue with our friends in the Swiss Parliament.

In the resolution we reiterate certain problems that we have in our relations as regards the provision of services, for example, not because we are upset, but because we are concerned about our relationship with Switzerland. Smooth, productive and predictable relations between the EU and Switzerland that are beneficial for both sides are of the utmost priority to us all.

Evelyne Gebhardt, *author.* – (DE) Madam President, good levels of cooperation with the Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) are very important to us. We enjoy a privileged relationship, which we wish to develop further in a highly positive way. However, this also means that both sides must adhere to existing agreements and, as the European Parliament and as Europeans, we must take care to ensure that no discrimination between the Member States of the European Union is allowed to creep in, whether in the interpretation of the wording of agreements, or in any other way. That is why I fail to understand the approach taken by the Swiss in applying the quota provisions that Switzerland is entitled to impose under the agreements. What we find unacceptable is that a distinction is made between Member States, in other words between the citizens of eight Member States of the European Union

and the remaining States of the Union. This runs counter to the spirit of the European Union.

We are all equal and must all be treated equally. That is why we cannot accept a distinction in this case. The provisions of Article 10 of the 1999 Agreement relate to employed and self-employed persons from the European Community. This is stated clearly in the agreements and we must insist that all citizens of the European Community are dealt with equally.

This is the reason for our question to the European Commission regarding the status of discussions in this area with Switzerland. We would also ask you to clarify that we do not have first and second class citizens in the European Union and that the quota provision must apply to the European Community as a whole and that no distinction between citizens is permitted.

IN THE CHAIR: ALEXANDER ALVARO

Vice-President

Sarah Ludford, *author.* – Mr President, I fully agree with the remarks of my colleagues from the EPP and S&D, as there is strong cross-party agreement on this matter. I, on behalf of ALDE, strongly regret that the Swiss authorities have decided to re-establish these quantitative restrictions – these quotas – on residence permits for nationals of the A8 Member States a year after the transitional restrictions expired.

I absolutely agree with Mr Trzaskowski that the decision to target these quotas only at eight Member States is discriminatory, and therefore unlawful. There is absolutely no legal basis, as Ms Gebhardt said, for any national differentiation in the existing treaties between Switzerland and the EU, and specifically in the 1999 agreement safeguard clause. I agree with Catherine Ashton's statement that the quotas are in breach of the agreement on the free movement of persons.

There are approximately one million EU nationals in Switzerland among a total of nearly 1.8 million foreigners, but my understanding is that until last year the Swiss Government had only awarded 2 000 residence permits to nationals from the A8, so I really do not see how this is a massive problem. This is on top of the fact that it is illegal to differentiate. I am sure that Switzerland appreciates that the free movement of persons is of huge advantage to the Swiss economy, making a crucial contribution to the creation and preservation of jobs.

ALDE believes that this measure is neither economically justified by the labour market situation, nor by the number of EU citizens actually seeking residence in Switzerland. Mention has been made of the wider problems of free movement of service providers, implementation of the free market and burdens on SMEs, so I am afraid there is much to discuss with Switzerland.

Tatjana Ždanoka, *author.* – Mr President, this is the second time during this Strasbourg session that we have asked why EU Member States are facing unequal treatment by third countries.

The first question, related to visa requirements, was addressed to Canada. The second, related to access to economic activity, we are putting today to our European neighbour, Switzerland, which has decided to re-establish quantitative limitations on the long-term

residence permits granted to nationals of the eight EU Member States which joined the EU in 2004, including my own country, Latvia.

Our group deplores this decision taken by the Swiss authorities and demands solidarity with the Member States concerned. Are these two precedents of unequal treatment of nationals of different EU Member States an example of opportunism, or maybe a sign of a new trend? Maybe there is an underlying reason for such phenomena.

Therefore our question is addressed not only to the Swiss authorities, but first of all to ourselves. Are the EU's own institutions and political leaders behaving in such a way that others cannot imagine introducing selective discriminatory treatment with respect to EU citizens? Maybe we ourselves are demonstrating a tendency for less solidarity and more national egoism.

In my opinion, the European Parliament must restart discussions on the enforcement of a common European citizenship. The status of the EU citizen must be more than simply a derivative of Member States' citizenship. Such a status may be a safeguard against the different treatment of possessors of European citizenship by third countries.

We know that 2013 will be the year of EU citizens – or EU citizenship – and there is a danger that the whole issue will be confined to particular problems. In my opinion, this will be the proper time to start promoting this kind of status of EU citizenship, which will grant equal treatment of EU citizens by Switzerland, Canada and any other country.

Adam Bielan, *author.* – (PL) Mr President, the agreement on the free movement of persons between the European Union and Switzerland was intended to guarantee openness and economic exchange. Although Switzerland remained outside the EU, it was provided with an excellent opportunity to cooperate with all the Member States. When concluding this agreement, both parties were guided by common national interests and the good of the citizens, and the Swiss authorities were fully aware that the EU would undergo further enlargements, and that the agreement did not allow any kind of distinction to be made between the EU's citizens. The fact that restrictions have been introduced on the number of permanent residence permits for citizens of the eight youngest members of the EU is all the more surprising because no concerns have been voiced in recent years. Indeed the authorities in most cantons are opposed to the idea, arguing that the labour market is not under any threat from immigrants.

In my opinion, Switzerland has misinterpreted the provisions of the agreement and the protocol concluded eight years ago. The European Union signed them as a single entity, and so it should be treated as a single entity. This means that Switzerland cannot apply these arrangements to individual countries, but only to the EU as a whole, and it cannot therefore block work permits for citizens of selected Member States. In this connection, I am glad to see that the Commission has come down firmly in opposition to this decision. A number of questions have also been raised in connection with the reference made by the Federal Council in Bern to the protocol's transitional provisions. The seven-year grace period for the new Member States ended a year ago, and Switzerland has not announced any intention to impose quotas since then.

In view of the fact that Brussels and Bern, and indeed Warsaw and Bern, have enjoyed excellent relations to date, and with a view to ensuring that these relations continue to move in the right direction, I would ask the representatives of the Swiss authorities to revise their position and to apply the agreement properly. I would call on the European institutions

to take steps to resolve this problem, and I would ask all countries to support our motion for a resolution in today's vote. Thank you.

Cornelia Ernst, *author.* – (DE) Mr President, I believe that we are faced with a very sensitive issue when we come to talk about residence restrictions, particularly because this gives a push to right-wing populist and extremist forces. When we see the populist right-wing Swiss People's Party successfully campaigning for a referendum on the issue of quotas for non-nationals, then we find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma.

There is something that I want to state clearly on behalf of our group: neither EU citizens nor anyone else should be allowed to become political footballs or the object of cheap right-wing propaganda as a result of so-called mass immigration, in this case involving Switzerland.

The problem is particularly difficult because it relates to European citizens. If we look at who obtains the largest number of residence permits, we find that over two-thirds are EU citizens. In April 2012, the Swiss authorities, in a hasty response, decided to introduce quotas for certain countries. If we take a closer look, we can see a contradiction here: if we consider the breakdown for residence permits as a whole, then we find that most are granted to Germans and Italians, not Czechs or Poles. The proportion of nationals from the eight countries in question is really relatively small and yet the 10 % rule is being invoked, something quite ridiculous in comparison with citizens of other countries. This again shows what happens when one deals with such questions in terms of percentages. You soon find yourself falling into a huge trap, as I would remind you.

It is politically dubious and counterproductive for Switzerland to invoke the agreement with the EU, referring to Article 10(4). We see this as a violation of the directive on the freedom of movement and the agreement with Switzerland and, above all, we consider it as discrimination against specific citizens and Member States. That must not be allowed to happen. We need equal treatment for all EU citizens, including in relation to Switzerland. We must be absolutely clear about this. For this reason, we refuse on principle to discuss quotas here, as they actually fan the flames of xenophobia.

Janez Potočnik, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, the EU-Switzerland agreement on the free movement of persons is of fundamental importance to the European Union and for the more than one million EU citizens who live and/or work in Switzerland. It is also a highly beneficial agreement for the Swiss economy and one of the factors which has helped Switzerland overcome the world economic crisis relatively swiftly. Therefore, the decision taken by the Swiss authorities to re-establish quantitative limits for nationals of eight Member States is highly regrettable in the context of very close and very good relations between the European Union and Switzerland.

As Baroness Ashton said in her statement of 18 April 2012, this decision is neither legal, nor justified by the Swiss socio-economic situation. Legally speaking, until 31 May 2014, the provisions of Article 10(4) of the agreement are applicable without distinction to nationals of all the Member States except Bulgaria and Romania, which are subject to another regime. According to the information at our disposal, it seems that the requirements for the application of quantitative restrictions under Article 10(4) of the agreement were not met, as the number of residence permits that Switzerland issued to EU citizens in the past year would not have exceeded the average of the previous three years by more than 10%. The agreement as supplemented by the protocol of 2006 permits no differentiation

on grounds of nationality, either for the establishment of ceilings or for the introduction of quotas.

Regrettably, there are hardly any legal tools that the European Union can use to reverse this measure. The only mechanism provided for by the agreement for the settlement of disputes is a joint committee of representatives of the parties. In the past, unfortunately, this mechanism has proved to be ineffective. Nonetheless, the EU will bring this issue up for discussion at the joint committee meeting on 27 June this year.

Beyond the lack of an effective mechanism for the settlement of disputes, this agreement also has other shortcomings. The first is its static nature: the agreement is based on the legal situation in the EU in 1999, when it was signed, and does not take into consideration either EU legal acts or European Court of Justice case-law after that date. There is provision for adaptation in the light of changing EU law only with regard to the coordination of social security systems and the recognition of professional qualifications.

It is particularly regrettable in this context that the agreement does not take account of Directive 2004/38 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, and thus, that a different legal regime applies to free movement between the EU and Switzerland.

The second shortcoming is the lack of any mechanism for monitoring Switzerland's compliance, by contrast to arrangements in the EU or, for example, the European Economic Area. In that context, I regret to inform the House that no concrete progress has been achieved on most of the issues identified by Parliament's resolution of 7 September 2010, in spite of almost two years of discussions with Switzerland within the joint committee, and in technical talks. The only matter on which I can report some success is the incorporation into the agreement on the free movement of persons of Directive 2005/36 on the recognition of professional qualifications, although the relevant measures have yet to enter into force.

Finally, as regards these institutional issues in particular, following the visit to Brussels in March 2012 by the Swiss President and the Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Government launched a consultation domestically. It then announced that it would make concrete proposals on institutional matters to the European Union. The Commission will analyse these proposals and deliver an opinion on them once they have been communicated officially by Switzerland.

Andreas Schwab, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the aim of this morning's debate and of the present resolution is to express our concerns, particularly those of the European Parliament, to our friends in Switzerland that cooperation between Switzerland and the European Union also involves obligations, both legal and political. The political obligations have already been mentioned. Commissioner, I am extremely grateful that you have mentioned the large number of legal obligations which it has not been possible to monitor satisfactorily in our relationship with Switzerland to date, as a Joint Parliamentary Committee is simply not up to this task because we have so many bilateral agreements involving so many mutual legal obligations. For this reason I would like to take your listing of all the difficulties involved in this situation as an opportunity to point out that the Commission is currently negotiating with Switzerland on a framework agreement that will, in principle, replace this Joint Parliamentary Committee with a real court that can actually make final judgments in legal questions as an impartial instance by mutual agreement, for example the Court of Justice of the European Union.

I believe that this must be an important message in the present debate, because there can be no doubt that discrimination against Members of the European Union cannot be accepted by anyone in this House, and we are therefore considering not only the freedom of movement of the citizens of these eight Member States, but also the freedom of movement of many economic operators in the European Union and Switzerland.

Olga Sehnalová, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (CS) Mr President, an economic crisis, mounting unemployment and a sense of insecurity: this is an environment in which prejudice and finger-pointing flourish. The cry goes up for those who take people's jobs, and the cry goes up for easy solutions. Websites that target citizens from Eastern and Central Europe are, unfortunately, the other side of the coin in relation to the topic under discussion today.

The residency quotas introduced by the Swiss Government since May on a selective basis against EU citizens from the eight new Member States are contrary to the fundamental European idea of free movement of persons and of workers. A differentiated approach based on nationality is, in my opinion, wholly unacceptable and wholly discriminatory as a matter of principle, not to mention the fact that employees from the new Member States account for only a tiny fraction of foreign workers in Switzerland. I therefore consider it essential to appeal to the Swiss Government to reconsider its decision and to scrap these discriminatory residency quotas.

I believe that rational arguments will ultimately prevail in the negotiations, and I would like to thank Baroness Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, for taking the first step in this direction.

Jürgen Creutzmann, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Mr Potočník, cooperation between the European Union and Switzerland is something dear to my heart. That is why it is important to deal with these issues hampering cooperation. We have heard that the provisions for the granting of residence permits for eight European countries no longer correspond to the agreements. We regret this action on the part of the Swiss authorities, particularly in view of the fact that this is just one of many measures that threaten the transposition of bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union; Mr Potočník has outlined the problems already.

It is evident from this that, within the Joint Committee, the Commission still needs to deal with the still outstanding measures for the free provision of services in Switzerland and the implementation of an internal market. If we succeed in making progress here and in reaching an agreement between Switzerland and the European Union that sets down binding rules when it comes to points under dispute, then this can only be to everyone's benefit.

The decision by the Swiss authorities is not just unwise in political terms, but also from an economic perspective. We know, for example, that there are many well-qualified young Polish citizens who would have had the opportunity to work in Switzerland in future and to contribute to prosperity there. I hope that Switzerland will revise this decision and withdraw it again.

Marije Cornelissen, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (NL) Mr President, Switzerland is a small white speck in the heart of Europe. Wherever you go as a Swiss national – east or west, north or south – you always reach the EU within a couple of hours. Obviously,

Switzerland wants a good relationship with the EU: freedom of trade, travel and employment and, of course, the EU wants a good relationship with Switzerland.

That is why we have a treaty regulating such matters, but that treaty is clearly insufficient. Switzerland seems to be misusing one of its provisions in order to make a distinction between EU citizens who are welcome and EU citizens who are not welcome. That is discrimination, pure and simple, towards Central and Eastern Europeans, and that is simply unacceptable.

I hope that the Commission will find a way to give this short shrift. We do not accept distinctions being made between EU citizens. Every person in our Union is worth the same and has the same fundamental rights. That is the basis of everything and we need to defend it to the utmost.

Tadeusz Cymański, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (PL) Mr President, the free movement of persons and equal treatment are some of the fundamental operating principles upon which the European Union is based. Switzerland's introduction of restrictions on the number of permanent residence permits is a flagrant violation of these principles. We are loathe to believe that any harm is meant, but the facts speak for themselves. It is notable that this issue affects the European Union Member States which in the past experienced isolation and the yoke of Communism, and is thus a test of sorts, as to whether the two Europes have become one, and whether we are together or separate. I firmly believe that the European Parliament will provide the European Commission with a strong case to put forward in further work and actions in respect of our Swiss friends. We will not allow any confrontational language to be used, but we believe that this is a situation which should not be allowed, and we firmly believe that a solution will be found quickly, since such a situation should not be allowed in a free Europe.

Simon Busuttil (PPE). – (MT) Mr President, I must admit that I am not satisfied with the Commission's reply today. I am not happy with it because if I have understood correctly, the Commission is telling us, "Yes you are right in saying that the agreement has been breached; the problem is how to go about fixing it." I do not think this is convincing enough. To my knowledge, we have a number of agreements with Switzerland in various sectors and we also have a safeguard clause with this same country. This guillotine clause stipulates that if Switzerland goes against any of its obligations in at least one of its agreements with us, then all the sectorial agreements that Switzerland has with the European Union will fall through. This is why I do not expect the Commission to stand before us today and tell us that it does not know how to solve this problem. I expect the Commission to come here and say, "We have a problem and I am going to do my utmost to ensure that the European Union does not let itself split from other countries and allow other countries to exploit this chasm." The European Commission is obliged to defend all European Union countries, especially on an international level, when it is representing us with regard to third countries.

Ioan Enciu (S&D). – (RO) Mr President, the quotas on the number of work and residence permits imposed by Switzerland on eight countries in Central and Eastern Europe are part of a whole series of discriminatory restrictions to which new Member States have been and continue to be subjected systematically. I do not agree with the Commission either. The Commission always takes a very general approach whenever there are discussions regarding discrimination against Eastern European states – such as visa reciprocity, access to the Schengen Area, discriminating sites and many more –, which I believe is wrong.

Concerning Switzerland, there is no legal ground for imposing these restrictions solely on certain European citizens, given that Article 10 of the Agreement referred to by the Swiss authorities concerns all EU citizens, irrespective of nationality. Moreover, this restriction is disproportionate and unjustified economically. We sympathise with all Member States that are being imposed restrictions of any kind, but I want to emphasise that the situation of Bulgarian and Romanian citizens is much more difficult. In Switzerland, they can be subject to residence and work restrictions until 2019, compared to 2014, the initial deadline. At the same time, Romanian and Bulgarian citizens still have limited access to employment in nine Member States, while Spain applies restrictions only on Romanian citizens.

Cecilia Wikström (ALDE). – (SV) Mr President, the resolution adopted by Switzerland in April will result in a significant reduction in the number of residence permits granted each year. This will fall from 6 000 to 2 000 for citizens from eight EU Member States. As we are all aware, this type of quota has been abolished in the past. Reintroducing a quota therefore represents a major step in the wrong direction. It will result in systematic discrimination, which is not something that we in the EU welcome.

The truth is that Switzerland has had considerable benefits and seen significant growth as result of the 1 million or so EU citizens who live and work there. A country with just under 8 million citizens needs these people in order to grow and prosper. Now right-wing populist forces have been at work, and I regret the fact that the Swiss Government has given in to them. It is embarrassing and unpleasant that Switzerland has picked out eight of the EU's Member States to discriminate against. The least we can ask for is that the Member States receive equal treatment.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) Mr President, the decision of the Swiss authorities in April this year to introduce quantitative quotas on the number of permits for residence in Switzerland granted to nationals of eight EU countries breaches the agreements signed by Switzerland and the EU in order to exploit the common advantages of the single market. According to our legal service, the Swiss authorities have no legal basis for these measures, and the European Commission must therefore open negotiations with our Swiss partners concerning the breach of international agreements, in particular the Agreement on the free movement of persons of June 1999. I cannot believe that the Swiss authorities did not realise the possible consequences of their cavalier behaviour. After all, if the Swiss wanted to question its contractual basis with the European Union merely so that it could avoid meeting its legal obligations to the EU, it would also lose the benefits arising to it from its cooperation with the EU. Therefore I firmly believe that the Commission must emphatically remind its Swiss partner of its commitments and, of course, demand that this regulation be changed.

Auke Zijlstra (NI). – (NL) Mr President, the European policy of open borders is increasingly turning into the free movement of criminals. The Netherlands, too, is facing problems with Central and Eastern European criminals. In Amsterdam, 90% of all suspects are not from the Netherlands, but from Poland, Romania, Lithuania and Bulgaria. I have asked the Commission to look at these figures, but it has refused to do so. Nevertheless, it is clear to everyone that open borders are causing problems.

Mr President, in 2004 the Commission was cheering as countries that were not ready to join the EU did so. The Commission and this Parliament, too, do not want to see any problems. Switzerland, on the other hand, is seeing a problem and taking action, and is an example to us all. Switzerland is sovereign, Switzerland *has* a stable currency, it is a country

with little corruption and has shown, with its ban on minarets, that its democracy is working. The Swiss are still in a position to choose and Switzerland can still fight for the interests of its citizens.

I therefore call on the Commission to show respect towards Switzerland's decision, to look at the figures from Amsterdam and to face head-on the problems of open borders.

Csaba Óry (PPE). – (HU) Mr President, agreements must be honoured – this is an old basic principle from Roman law which to this day no one has called into question, and it applies even if the crisis has given rise to difficult and complicated situations and serious internal political disputes in several countries. We are experiencing this in our own countries as well, and yet we always urge each other to honour the agreements we have concluded, whether they are internal or external.

What happened here was not an accidental breach of agreement but was, it would seem, a quite deliberate deviation from an agreement. There are at least three points here that constitute a deliberate violation of the agreement.

There can be no discrimination between Member States, but here there is discrimination between Member States. As we know, the protection clause can be invoked in case of growth in excess of 10% above the average; this 10% must be calculated for 27 Member States, and not for eight or four or for whichever Member States we single out. Consequently, this is another breach of the agreement. The third breach of agreement is that the quota established should be higher than the last applicable quota, whereas here we are seeing the opposite, namely that the quota is set at two thousand persons, which is lower than the previous quota of three thousand.

This therefore suggests a significant degree of deliberate action. Fourthly, the introduction of these measures was not preceded by consultations. This is an aspect which casts doubt on the presence of goodwill, and I therefore agree with Mr Busuttil that we expect a firm and clear response from the European Commission, and that this Swiss measure, this breach of agreement, is unacceptable.

Tanja Fajon (S&D). – (SL) Mr President, in my country, Slovenia, we deplore Switzerland's decision. The measure is discriminatory and sad for a country that has a reputation as a country with democratic traditions.

The situation in the labour market and the number of migrants from the European Union do not justify this. It is embarrassing to read that the extreme right in Switzerland, in its campaign for a referendum against immigrants, has used a poster depicting black working boots trampling the Swiss flag. The action taken by the Swiss Government is in contrast to what Switzerland has agreed to. Freedom of movement is the main pillar for the construction of European integration.

All citizens of the European Union have equal rights. We cannot allow the intimidation of Europeans which we have witnessed in the Netherlands and Belgium, among other countries. We clearly have to condemn extreme populist and nationalist rhetoric and combat all forms of discrimination. Spreading hateful ideas is particularly dangerous in the midst of a financial, economic and social crisis.

I expect the Swiss Government to radically rethink its decision. And since I do not expect the European Commission will take decisive action, why not terminate internal markets agreements with Switzerland?

Róża Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, as we can see, the debate on introducing quotas for Swiss residence permits for citizens of certain EU Member States is a very lively one. I am glad to see that citizens of various countries are taking part in this debate – Members from the countries which were founding members of the European Union as well as those from countries which only joined the European Union at a later date. From right to left and from left to right, across all the parties which engage in heated disputes on a daily basis and have very different opinions, in this debate we are all agreed and we all wholeheartedly support the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Trzaskowski and others. It has gained such wide support today because we are aware that the closer our cooperation and the more open we are with each other, the more we will achieve.

One of the characteristic features of the European Union is its ability to create ‘win-win’ situations. I have the feeling that Swiss citizens know this too. After all, they voted in favour of Schengen in the 2005 referendum, and in favour of the free movement of persons in 2009. Both these decisions had broad public backing. Why should an administrative decision now be allowed to push our friends, our acquaintances and the neighbouring country of Switzerland away from us, and stop us from enjoying a ‘win-win’ situation? Thank you.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE). – (LT) Mr President, I am pleased that we are considering and discussing this case today in the European Parliament. The EU-Switzerland agreements do not provide for the possibility of dividing EU citizens into different categories according to the Member States they come from. This decision by Switzerland cannot be motivated by public pressure because in a referendum back in 2009 the Swiss themselves expressed their approval of the free movement of workers to and from the European Union (reciprocal movement). Recently in plenary we were angry about a website supported by Dutch politicians which discriminated against migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, who, apparently, take away jobs, but they were not just complaining about that, but about cars not being parked where they should be or about noise late in the evening. Such tendencies are very worrying whereby, during the economic downturn, attempts are being made to scapegoat those who are different. I nevertheless hope that the European Union and Switzerland will deal with these challenges together by means of normal dialogue.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D). – (SK) Mr President, on 18 April, the Swiss Government announced that it had unilaterally decided to reintroduce immigration quotas for citizens of eight European Union countries, including my country – the Slovak Republic. Moreover, the government stated that it would review the programme before its expiry in April 2013 and consider extending it for a further year. By doing so, the Swiss Government is violating the bilateral agreement between the Swiss Confederation and the European Union in the changes in the 2004 Protocol. The move is discriminatory, and the prohibition of discrimination between EU citizens is also laid down in Article 21, Chapter 3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The amendments to Switzerland’s immigration policy are justified neither economically nor in terms of the labour market situation or the number of migrants from the EU. A further negative aspect of the decision is that the affected countries were not informed of the measure in advance. Switzerland cannot unilaterally benefit from cooperation with the EU and yet prevent EU citizens from benefiting from the Swiss economy. I would like to thank colleagues from States that are not affected by this for their solidarity and support.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE). – Mr President, I would like to interject in my capacity as Chair of the European Parliament delegation with responsibility for Switzerland. Speaking in a personal capacity, I am concerned by this resolution, which seems to go beyond the issue of residence permits. The resolution was drafted without consultation with our delegation or, indeed, with the Swiss mission to the EU. Perhaps this is the norm, which I believe should be changed. We should have some input.

While I do not have sufficient time to address each aspect of the resolution, I understand that there are some issues which require clarification. I would sincerely hope that this resolution will not tarnish the good relationship between the EU and Switzerland, our fourth-largest trading partner. The next EU-Swiss inter-parliamentary meeting will take place in Berne on 16 July, at which we would hope to have a full and constructive discussion with our Swiss counterparts of the delegation on all aspects of the resolution, and I also understand that the issue will be raised in the Joint Committee of the Free Movement of Persons Agreement (FMPA) on 27 June.

Indrek Tarand (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, I have one proposal to make, although though I doubt that the Rules of Procedure give me the right to make it.

I would call on the rapporteurs to ask for the postponement of this vote today, in order to give the delegation mentioned by Mr Gallagher the time and opportunity to negotiate, and to convey our concerns to the Swiss authorities about the unfortunate decisions, of a discriminatory nature, which they have taken. If the delegation comes back without being able to convince our Swiss colleagues – in other words, if it is a complete failure – we can follow up with the tough resolution which has been debated today.

Andrew Henry William Brons (NI). – Mr President, Switzerland is a sovereign state and has had the sense to avoid becoming a member of the EU Soviet. I make no unfavourable judgment about the general populations of Eastern Europe; however, the differences in wage rates between the East and the West have had the effect of attracting large numbers from East to West, to the economic and social disruption of both.

Switzerland has a particularly high GDP per capita. Why? Possibly because it is outside the EU. In 2009, nearly a quarter of the Swiss population consisted of immigrants, and 31% had an immigrant background. How overwhelmed does Switzerland have to become before it is permitted to act? The EU is a playground bully and a control freak. Not content with bullying its own members into submission, it also wants to bully everybody else. All Member States and non-member states should stand up to the bullying and retake control over their own borders, regardless of treaty obligations.

End of the catch-the-eye procedure

Janez Potočnik, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I think it is right to start by saying that Switzerland is one of our partners and a sincere friend. We should never forget that and we should nurture the relationship. I have my own experience from international negotiations in an environmental area, where we have extremely good cooperation. They are also truly a globally respected partner.

But this is an important issue we are discussing today and it deserves a clear, united and straightforward approach and reaction. The Commission attaches great importance to the solution of the institutional issues which affect our relations with Switzerland and in several areas which are related to the internal market. As I have already mentioned, we will certainly open this issue in the joint committee in a few weeks.

The scarce and inefficient means of contesting the re-establishment of quotas, or the so-called flanking measures, and having them revoked show that such institutional issues are not only theoretical or a matter of principle but, on the contrary, they have very practical implications for the rights and legitimate interests of citizens and economic operators.

Just to give two short concrete clarifications on points mentioned by Members. The guillotine clause referred to by Mr Busuttil applies in the case of the termination of one of the agreements. So we have no intention of proposing the denunciation of the agreement. This would be even more detrimental for the European Union and also for our citizens. On the questions, even if we in the Commission bring into play any measure related to the existing agreements or the ongoing negotiations, this issue clearly underlines once more the inadequacy of our current agreement.

The Commission will keep this, as well as other issues, under consideration when examining whether it is opportune to start new negotiations or conclude ongoing ones. Also the Council, in its conclusions of December 2010 on the relations with EFTA countries, indicated that, 'in assessing the balance of interests in concluding additional agreements, it will have in mind the need to ensure parallel progress in all areas of cooperation, including those areas which cause difficulties to EU companies and citizens'.

To conclude, yes, we have a problem and, yes, we are working on solving it. I would like to thank honourable Members for raising these questions. Of course the Commission counts on Parliament's support in the forthcoming discussions with regard to Switzerland.

Hubert Pirker (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I have a high opinion of your chairmanship and I know how important transparency is to you. I am baffled, however, by your approach to the catch-the-eye procedure. For example, I have been here since the start of the debates and I asked to take the floor as soon as the report was announced, however I was not allotted speaking time. Others were allowed to speak. Could you explain your approach, for the sake of transparency?

President. – I would be happy to oblige, Mr Pirker. Firstly, perhaps you will have noticed that I did not preside over this debate from the outset. Accordingly I regret that I did not realise that you did indeed have the discipline to be here from the start. The Rules of Procedure themselves state that if we have a five-minute 'catch-the-eye' procedure, then five speakers are permitted. It is basically a matter for the President to decide how to handle this. I do not know the eight colleagues from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (PPE) who requested the floor. I actually made what I thought was the fairest choice. I chose a woman so that there would be a balanced representation of the genders, because the other groups were all represented by men. I am not sure if my answer will satisfy you, but I have to follow some rationale in making a choice. With eight members of the PPE Group requesting the floor, I freely admit that my choice was not based on who had been here for how long. As I was not presiding at the start of the debate, but only took over the chair at a later stage, I was not aware of this. I can assure you, however, that I will take this into consideration the next time, particularly in your case. If a Member has had the discipline to attend a debate from start to finish, then he should be given the opportunity to speak. I apologise that this was not the case this time.

I have received one motion for a resolution ⁽¹⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure ⁽²⁾.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today at 12.00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Danuta Jazłowiecka (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) The Swiss Government's decision to introduce restrictions on the number of permanent residence permits issued to citizens of the eight Central and Eastern European countries is particularly worrying in the context of the discrimination suffered by citizens of this part of Europe, for example in the Netherlands. A groundless distinction has recently been made between citizens of 'better' and 'worse' European Union Member States, which could have very dangerous repercussions in future. The citizens of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary account for only a small percentage of the EU citizens permanently residing and working in Switzerland. It is therefore difficult to understand the Swiss Government's decision, which was allegedly taken to protect the national labour market. What is also outrageous is that this decision appears to be illegal, since the agreement between Switzerland and the EU states that restrictions on access to the labour market may only be introduced for all EU citizens. Switzerland makes unlimited use of the rights it enjoys due to its membership in the European Economic Area. Swiss exports to the EU-10 amounted to over EUR 4 billion in 2010, which is equivalent to the value of the country's exports to China. In view of this, we are entitled to demand reciprocity from Switzerland in our economic relations. We are calling on the European Commission to take urgent measures to clarify the current situation.

Tunne Kelam (PPE), *in writing.* – I am Estonian. I am citizen of the EU. My country joined the European Union believing that it would be treated equally and would fully enjoy all of the same rights enjoyed by European citizens. Since the 2004 enlargement, the peoples of the ten post-communist countries have had to face several hurdles in their progress towards real equality – often accompanied by humiliations – such as: delays in opening up the job market, restrictive measures on business making, etc.

As a member of EFTA, Switzerland has signed the Free Movement of Persons Agreement, which guarantees all EU citizens equal rights on the Swiss labour and business market. Introducing restrictive measures and quotas for nationals of some EU member states has to be assessed as a discriminatory measure. Clearly, it cannot be derived from Article 10 of the 1999 agreement. Quotas should be established for all EU nationals or for no one; they are not supposed to be used in a selective way based on nationality. There are some alarming trends in today's Europe: hate websites in the Netherlands and Belgium, and new Swiss laws which result in the practical marginalisation of citizens originating from post-communist EU Member States. I call on the Commission to unconditionally condemn such acts and, if necessary, to apply the necessary sanctions.

Jacek Protasiewicz, (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) The Swiss Government's decision to re-introduce quotas restricting the number of permanent residence permits in certain categories issued to citizens of the eight new EU Member States – the Czech Republic,

(1) See Minutes

(2) See Minutes

Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Hungary – makes an unacceptable and unfair distinction between EU citizens on the basis of their nationality, which means that it is discriminatory and in conflict with European values and law. As was the case recently with the PVV Internet portal in the Netherlands, the European Parliament always takes a resolute stand against violations of the fundamental principles underpinning the EU, one of which is the ban on nationality-based discrimination. I therefore agree entirely with the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, who believes that this decision violates the agreement on the free movement of persons, which does not allow for any distinction to be made between EU citizens. The agreement allows Swiss citizens to move freely around the territory of the EU, but the same rights must also be guaranteed to all EU citizens on Swiss territory. Switzerland concluded an agreement with the EU and should now fulfil its obligations under this agreement. The Swiss Government can impose quotas if it believes them to be necessary, but the quotas must apply to all EU citizens without exception, since there are no first-class or second-class citizens in the EU, and all EU citizens should be treated the same.

Tadeusz Zwiefka (PPE), in writing. – (PL) I find it concerning that both today and over the space of the past few months we have repeatedly discussed an issue as fundamental as the freedom of movement and residence, not least because our debates have concerned highly-developed countries with a long tradition of democracy. Switzerland's decision to impose temporary quotas on work permits for workers from selected EU Member States is quite simply a flagrant violation of the existing agreements between the EU and the Swiss Confederation. EU citizenship is enshrined in Article 9 TEU, and acts as a legal tie binding every natural person who holds citizenship of a Member State with the European Union. Citizens have both obligations and rights as a result, including the most important of all rights, that of the free movement of persons. European citizenship is also underpinned by the principle of equal treatment for individual citizens, regardless of their nationality. The resolution we are voting on today takes a constructive approach by opening up the subject for discussion and cooperation, and by setting out our opinion on the decision taken by the Swiss Confederation's National Council. What is most important is for us to remember that the European Union was created for the good of its citizens. The freedom and liberty of these citizens should therefore be among the main points of focus for the work of the European Union's institutions. As Members of the European Parliament, we are therefore obliged to make very clear our disapproval of attempts to introduce mechanisms which discriminate against citizens of the European Union.

7. General provisions for macro-financial assistance to third countries (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Metin Kazak, on behalf of the Committee on International Trade, on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general provisions for macro-financial assistance to third countries (COM(2011)0396 – C7-0187/2011 – 2011/0176(COD)) (A7-0157/2012).

Metin Kazak, rapporteur. – (BG) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the EU's macro-financial assistance was launched in 1990 to grant financial assistance to third countries experiencing short-term balance of payments difficulties. A total of 55 decisions benefiting 23 countries have so far been approved, amounting to EUR 7.2 billion in the form of grants, loans, or a combination of both.

In our justifications accompanying the draft regulation, the Commission and I, as rapporteur, are pursuing two main objectives: making macro-financial assistance more

effective and the need to devise clear rules and conditions for agreeing to provide it. I am not going, of course, to dwell on every detail, but I would also like to share my fundamental ideas which, I firmly believe, vindicate the basic prerogatives of the European Parliament.

First of all, the Commission proposed that decisions to grant macro-financial assistance on a case-by-case basis should be adopted using implementing acts in order to speed up the process of granting such assistance and make it more efficient. However, I disagree with this approach, particularly given that, at the moment, every case for granting macro-financial assistance is handled using the codecision procedure. This is why I am also proposing the use of delegated acts because they combine greater speed and efficiency with the need for democratic scrutiny to be carried out by the European Parliament.

Secondly, I think that macro-financial assistance must provide European added value and should only be used when the EU has something to offer rather than act as a top-up from the International Monetary Fund. In addition, this assistance is often too small to guarantee implementation of the policy adopted under the Memorandum of Understanding. This is the reason why the report proposes that, in most cases, the European Union's contribution should not fall below a certain minimum percentage to guarantee large countries' access to the assistance and also the European Union's involvement to ensure such added value.

The practice of linking macro-financial assistance to an International Monetary Fund scheme should continue as the norm, but there must be flexibility for the European Union to work with other European and multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank or the European Investment Bank.

The Commission's proposal is slightly vague on how the ratio of grants to loans is determined, stating that it will consider the level of economic development of the beneficiary country, but without explaining how this analysis will be used.

Fourthly, and very importantly, macro-financial assistance is also an EU foreign policy tool. Close involvement of the European External Action Service for the purpose of coordination and the consistency of this policy should be ensured throughout the whole macro-financial assistance operation, thereby increasing the coherence between macro-financial assistance and the objectives stipulated in the EU's foreign policy for promoting democracy and human rights.

This is why it would be useful to introduce a special report from this service prior to offering any macro-financial assistance to verify whether each partner country respects human rights and other political conditions.

I firmly believe that policy measures should be included in the Memorandum of Understanding in the area of democratic principles and human rights. Furthermore, I think that deterioration in democratic conditions provides a reason for the suspension, reduction or cancellation of the disbursement of assistance.

Lastly, I would like to emphasise that the Commission suggested that this would be a temporary regulation valid only for this financial framework, which means that it will last less than two years. I proposed that the regulation should be open-ended, thereby guaranteeing legal certainty and avoiding duplication of effort.

Janez Potočnik, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, it was a key objective of the Commission's proposal to make MFA a more timely and effective tool, while fully ensuring Parliament's ownership and support. That was also clearly stated by Mr Kazak, whom I

thank for the report. I should also like to thank the members of the Committee on International Trade (INTA) for their work.

We welcome this report, therefore, as a good basis for further discussions. I would like to focus the Commission's initial feedback on three points which were also addressed by the rapporteur: the use of the delegated act procedure, the issue of political pre-conditions and, finally IMF conditionality.

The report proposes using the delegated act procedure – under Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – to adopt decisions for individual MFA programmes, by introducing an annex which would be amended for each decision. It also proposes that the memorandum of understanding for each programme should be adopted by the delegated act procedure. However, we believe that the Treaty is clear on this issue: the delegated act procedure is applicable only to non-legislative acts of general application, to supplement or amend non-essential elements of the legislative act.

From the Commission's perspective, decisions on individual programmes and on memoranda of understanding would be classic cases of implementing the legislative act, not supplementing it. The Framework Regulation should establish which countries are eligible, and the conditions for providing MFA. These conditions should be implemented in a uniform way for all operations. Therefore, in accordance with Article 291 of the Treaty, the implementing powers for decisions concerning individual programmes and for the memoranda of understanding should be conferred on the Commission.

The report also proposes using the delegated act procedure for updating the list of eligible countries. For these exceptional cases, the use of the delegated act procedure could indeed be further explored.

Concerning political pre-conditions, the Commission supports the proposal to strengthen the assessment and monitoring of political pre-conditionality. Democratic mechanisms, the rule of law and respect for human rights are important pre-conditions for MFA, and a reference to this could indeed be further strengthened in the Regulation. However, the Commission would strongly argue against the definition of specific political measures in the area of human rights or democratic institutions as conditions for the disbursement of MFA tranches. This would turn a genuinely macroeconomic instrument into an essentially political instrument; this would be, in our view, contrary to the nature and the objectives of MFA.

The Commission would like to emphasise that economic governance is already an integral part of MFA. Issues such as corruption and transparency are regularly referred to in MFA conditionality.

Finally, on the issue of IMF conditionality, softening IMF conditionality as proposed by the report raises quite a number of concerns. The IMF is the main provider of macro-economic assistance to countries undergoing serious balance of payments difficulties. The IMF programme offers a framework for the adjustment process and, by definition, the IMF is the key institution for balance of payments support. It cannot be replaced by another European or multilateral financial institution, as no other institution provides this type of support. The fact that MFA is a complementary instrument by nature is also reflected in the size of the instrument. Giving up the connection to the exercise of an IMF programme would therefore not be advisable.

To conclude, MFA is important as a means of helping to stabilise countries close to the EU. However, decision-making procedures have become heavy and have slowed down the effectiveness of this tool. The Framework Regulation is truly a chance to sharpen it up and enable it to be used more efficiently. The Commission is eager to work closely with Parliament to achieve this goal.

Nadezhda Neynsky, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*. – Mr President, first of all, I would like to thank Mr Kazak for the comprehensive report. It is important to know that AFET proposed faster disbursement of macro-financial assistance by the adoption of delegated acts for strategically important third countries only.

We were of the opinion that the European Parliament's leverage and scrutiny role should not be undermined. Let me also remind you that the list of candidate and neighbouring countries is approved by Parliament in various legal texts. We established, in the report, clear and precise eligibility criteria for the disbursement of MFA funds, regular country analysis and monitoring as well as seizure of wrongfully appropriated assets.

Furthermore the AFET opinion divides eligible countries into candidate, potential candidate, neighbourhood and – in exceptional and duly justified circumstances – strategically important third countries. I am glad to see that most of AFET's proposals have largely been included in the final report.

The instrument for macro-financial assistance is a very important foreign policy tool of the European Union. Despite having a smaller budget than other external action instruments, it brings great benefits to recipient countries by improving their balance of payments and thus stabilising their economies. It does not overlap at all, in terms of scope and goals, with other external action instruments. For this reason, and to demonstrate the European Union's commitment to the stability and prosperity of our neighbourhood, I urge you all to support the report.

Daniel Caspary, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to congratulate Mr Kazak on his draft report, also on behalf of my colleague Mr Winkler, who is our group's shadow rapporteur for this brief. I would like to thank the Commission expressly for this proposal in relation to macro-financial assistance, as it gives us a very good legal framework for helping those countries that genuinely need our urgent assistance.

What is important to us, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), is that this instrument should be put to real use in close cooperation between the European External Action Service, the Directorate-General for Trade and all other affected parties. We must incorporate this instrument more effectively in European foreign and security policy than we have done in the past.

The instrument has already demonstrated that it works. Macro-financial assistance has been granted 55 times to 23 countries since 1990. The countries that we support in this way are our immediate neighbours, showing that we are willing and able to offer genuine assistance in times of crisis, when these countries need our help.

For this reason we expressly support the proposal from Mr Kazak that today's final vote should be postponed. We want a quick solution. We want the revised version of this instrument to come into force quickly and would be very pleased if we can come up with a good solution during the forthcoming negotiations.

Maria Eleni Koppa, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (EL) Mr President, swift adoption of this framework regulation is of vital importance to third countries facing balance-of-payment difficulties. The European Parliament has repeatedly highlighted the need for an official legal instrument that regulates financial assistance to third countries quickly and effectively.

This regulation has been very slow in coming. In the meantime, the situation has changed. Due to the financial crisis, which has caused numerous problems, we need to be able to react quickly, consistently and regularly; otherwise, this aid is pointless.

I should like to note at this point that we must ensure that there is a close link between financial assistance and human rights and democratic institutions as one of the preconditions. Often, financial assistance has been granted to countries with a dubious attitude to these values.

I believe that the Union should remain committed to strengthening democratic institutions and to human rights, transparency and the fight against corruption. Therefore, every country that applies for macro-financial assistance should also be evaluated on the above counts.

The European External Action Service has a fundamental role to play here in preventing a repeat of the recent problem with Ukraine.

Finally, my warmest thanks to the rapporteur for his detailed report. May I say that my group, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, fully endorses his views. I trust that the Council will agree with Parliament on this.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD), *Blue-card question*. – Ms Koppa, do you think that the level of corruption in a recipient country should be a criterion for whether macro-financial assistance is paid or not?

Maria-Eleni Koppa (S&D), *Blue-card answer*. – (EL) Mr President, the situation in a country in receipt of aid is, of course, extremely important. As spokesperson for the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, I consider that corruption is, of course important, but that the main emphasis needs to be on human rights and democracy, where we often apply double standards by skirting round the issue.

Niccolò Rinaldi, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, in our view there are two basic elements here.

The first is the issue of democracy, which means full involvement of the European Parliament in decisions on macro-financial assistance (MFA), its implementation and its suspension. Given that these are not technical or executive decisions, it is important that Parliament always be called upon to give its opinion.

The second is political conditionality. As has already been pointed out, there is no point in setting up a European External Action Service if it is not fully involved in decisions as important as macro-financial assistance; there is no point in focusing on human rights and then failing to take them into account when making important decisions.

I will add a third issue, which I regard as important: Central Asia is not mentioned explicitly among the beneficiaries of MFA, even though they are countries with which we have important economic relations. The European Union has its own specific strategy on Central Asia and it is vital that macro-financial assistance be one of its pillars.

Keith Taylor, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, I should like to thank Mr Kazak for his report. The Greens appreciate that the Commission has come forward with this proposal for a general regulation on MFA. We have been asking for such a regulation for the last five years and now the question arises whether this proposal is still in time.

Given that Parliament is about to start the revision of the existing financial instruments for the period 2014-2020, and given the limited size and importance of the MFA instrument, we wonder whether it might not be wise to integrate the MFA into the new European Neighbourhood Instrument from 2014 onwards. This instrument already provides for budget support and could accommodate conditionality. We would only need to integrate the MFA elements when blending grants and loans into the ENI framework, but this should be possible.

For Greens this would seem to be the most elegant way to signal to our neighbourhood partners that we are still willing to support their balance of payments stability while solving the problem of how to make MFA more of a true EU structural adjustment programme. We sadly did not receive the support of the other political groups over this idea. Hence we will go with the rapporteur and we will be abstaining in the vote later on.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Paul Rübig (PPE), *Blue-card question*. – (DE) Mr Taylor, there is a demonstration going on outside at the moment for equal pay for men and women. Do you believe that with sufficient financial assistance it would be possible to encourage young women entrepreneurs, for example, thus creating new jobs and employment opportunities? What would you think of a programme aimed at fostering entrepreneurial talent among young women?

Keith Taylor (Verts/ALE), *Blue-card answer*. – Thank you for the question, but I do not entirely understand why there should be any element of gender specificity: there should be equal rights for equal work, applying equally to men and women, and to young men and young women.

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, last year, EUR 107 million was paid out in macro-financial assistance. Since the scheme began the EU has paid out EUR 9 billion, all to countries which are not even members of the EU. From the point of view of the taxpayer, the scheme closely resembles pre-accession funding, another wasteful giveaway of our money. Not to mince words, it is simply a slush fund.

Last year, Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina got macro-financial assistance, three countries with deserved reputations for bribery, corruption and organised crime. The term 'macro-financial assistance' is simply EU jargon intended to conceal what is really going on: yet more British taxpayers' money paid out by the EU to the wrong people and then wasted.

Helmut Scholz, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – Mr President, the Policy Department's study 'EU macro-financial assistance: a critical assessment' provides a useful and telling

assessment of MFA operations so far. It shows the impact of both the scope and the volume of the loans and grants to be very marginal in many cases.

The new procedures under the Treaty of Lisbon make the process of applying MFA more cumbersome. The consent of Parliament is now necessary for all applications of the MFA, and we understand the willingness of the Commission to simplify the procedures. Mr Kazak – whom I thank, on my own behalf and that of our shadow rapporteur, for his cooperation – proposes to apply the delegated acts procedure in respect of eligible countries and granting assistance to particular countries. As a group, we support this view. Our group is not against the imposition of some conditions but they must be the right ones. Our group considers it a serious mistake to continue to impose, within the framework of the MFA, the same conditions imposed by the IMF.

We need to address these challenges, in particular in the light of the current financial and economic crisis.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D). – Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Kazak for his work. I would like to underline two aspects of micro-financial help from the Commission.

Firstly, it is necessary to make a list of priority countries due to their geographical position. First of all, countries with a common border with European society – Ukraine, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Serbia and so on. MFA is important for more effective cooperation with the governments of these countries on the European continent.

Secondly, the European Parliament cannot be a co-owner of the rules. I would like to remind the Commission that the European Parliament is the only owner and founder in European society, especially in the case of fund transfers.

Charles Goerens (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, the Commission is proposing to speed up the process of providing funds allocated under the general provisions of macro-financial assistance to third countries. The obstacles that it has encountered in this area are those that we might expect: the trend towards ever-increasing precautions and checks means that it is difficult to respond sufficiently swiftly to the needs of those partner countries which depend on macro-financial assistance.

I do not see this need for prudence, and would merely like to point out that assistance given too late can sometimes be just as unproductive as no assistance whatsoever.

I do not find that delegated acts, as defined under Article 290 of the Treaty of Lisbon, are a panacea in any way. However, they do have the advantage of successfully reconciling the need for effective delivery with Parliament's need for control.

Janez Potočnik, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, honourable Members, macro-financial assistance is, without doubt, a truly important instrument, and we should use it in the best possible way. I would like to thank Ms Neynsky for the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the point about the use of the implementing act for the most eligible countries.

I can provide some clarifications and some answers to your questions. On the question concerning the level of corruption in recipient countries, this is already a criterion. The same goes for public-finance management, a key condition for disbursement. On the 20% minimum share, which was mentioned by the rapporteur, the Commission has sympathy with the aim of ensuring that MFA is seen to offer added value, but we believe that fixing an indicative minimum share for it is quite difficult. Economically, it would be difficult to

justify the precise figure of 20% and, as with the maximum share which is an aspect of the general criteria, there are also difficulties in calculating residual financial gaps in an unambiguous way, in particular given the differences in the reference periods due to the delays in the MFA decision-making process.

On the role of the European External Action Service in the decision making, I can say that it is already consulted before any MFA proposal is adopted by the College of Commissioners. The EEAS participates both in inter-service consultations at staff level and in the College decision itself, through the Vice-President/High-Representative, as well as before every disbursement, of course. However, given that the EEAS is an autonomous body and not an institution, and given the Treaty provisions, the EEAS cannot be singled out and put in a legal act in the same manner as the Commission. However, we have sympathy for strengthening its role in the regulation, as I have already mentioned.

Finally, on the question of whether the regulation should be prolonged, what do we think about that? This regulation is, as you know, being proposed under the current multiannual financial framework (MFF). Given the delays and the parallel discussions on external instruments under the MFF, it might make sense to extend it into the next financial framework period. However, deleting the expiry date and any reference to a specific financial framework would be contrary to all common budgetary practice. Also, this regulation includes numerous specific conditions for MFA which might need to be reviewed in eight years' time. Therefore, it would make more sense to limit its application, as was done in the case of all the other external instruments, and link it to the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework.

I would like, once again, to thank all of you who have participated, and especially the rapporteur, Mr Kazak.

Metin Kazak, *rapporteur.* – (BG) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank all of you who gave, on behalf of the political groups, a huge endorsement to the main strategic ideas in this report.

I am grateful most of all for the support for my desire for the European Parliament to preserve the important role it received, in particular after the Treaty of Lisbon, of subjecting to democratic scrutiny the political decisions adopted on trade policy.

I think that we actually have an area where we can cooperate with the Commission and Council to achieve a compromise on using delegated acts as one specific option for reconciling the need to speed up the decision-making process for granting macro-financial assistance with the need to maintain this democratic scrutiny from the European Parliament.

I am also grateful for the understanding of the role of the European External Action Service as an additional guarantor ensuring the coherence of these decisions with our common foreign policy and the requirements to respect democratic principles and human rights.

I really believe that we have a chance of reaching agreement. I think that if all the institutions approach the requirements with understanding, this macro-financial assistance will actually fulfil the role intended for it. I call, in future discussions we will have on this issue, for a constructive approach and success in achieving this compromise.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today at 12.00.

(The sitting was suspended at 11.55 pending voting time, and resumed at 12.00)

IN THE CHAIR: ISABELLE DURANT

Vice-President

8. Composition of Parliament: see Minutes

9. Continued and increased support for vaccinations in developing nations (written declaration)

President. – Written declaration No 0004/2012 by Mary Honeyball, Véronique De Keyser, Seán Kelly, Bill Newton Dunn and Marie-Christine Vergiat, on continued and increased support for vaccinations in developing nations, has been signed by a majority of Parliament's component Members and will consequently, in accordance with Rule 123(3) and (4) of the Rules of Procedure, be transmitted to its addressees and published in the Texts adopted in this sitting, and the names of the signatories will be listed in the Minutes.

Mary Honeyball (S&D). – Madam President, first of all, I would like to thank everyone who signed this declaration. It is a very important subject. I am sure you are all delighted that we have adopted a declaration asking for adequate funding for vaccinations in developing countries.

I would like to thank the NGOs we worked with: GAVI, Global Health Associates, the ONE Campaign and Results UK. I would also like to thank the other proposers, Ms Vergiat, Ms De Keyser, Mr Newton Dunn and of course Mr Kelly, who I know now wants to say a few words.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Madam President, very briefly, I concur with the thanks that Mary very kindly mentioned a minute ago. I should just like to say to everybody that the poor children of Africa will be the beneficiaries of your generosity by, hopefully, having a longer life and a better quality of life.

10. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

10.1. General provisions for macro-financial assistance to third countries (A7-0157/2012 - Metin Kazak) (vote)

- Before the vote on the legislative resolution:

Metin Kazak, rapporteur. – (FR) Madam President, I propose that the final vote on this legislative report is deferred to allow for negotiations with the Council and the Commission with a view to reaching a compromise, which is absolutely necessary, insofar as there are currently other legislative reports, the results of which depend on this one. That is why I am asking for the support of all groups to defer the final vote.

(Parliament agreed to the request and, consequently, the matter was deemed to have been referred back to the committee responsible for reconsideration)

10.2. Situation in Ukraine, case of Yulia Tymoshenko (B7-0235/2012) (vote)

10.3. Fight against homophobia in Europe (B7-0234/2012) (vote)

10.4. A resource-efficient Europe (A7-0161/2012 - Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy) (vote)

10.5. Youth opportunities initiative (B7-0233/2012) (vote)

10.6. Equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value (A7-0160/2012 - Edit Bauer) (vote)

10.7. Swiss quotas on the number of residence permits granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary (B7-0248/2012) (vote)

President. – That concludes the vote.

11. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes

12. Explanations of vote

Oral explanations of vote

Report: Metin Kazak (A7-0157/2012)

Iva Zanicchi (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, since 1990 the European Union has used macro-financial assistance to provide financial aid in the form of grants and loans or a combination of both to countries with short-term balance-of-payments difficulties. In addition to timeframes that are rather long, difficulties have arisen over the decision-making criteria used, which has made it necessary to propose amendments to the Regulation.

I therefore welcome the proposal introduced in the new regulation, which aims to introduce quicker, more effective evaluation criteria and to agree on clearer rules and conditions for the provision of macro-financial assistance.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, I do not believe that anyone would object to macro-financial assistance, and when countries are in trouble we want to help them, including financially. On the other hand, we naturally need to attach conditions. The first condition is, of course, that this money should genuinely reach its intended destination, free from corruption. The second condition is that the assistance should involve real economic support, and the third that the emergency situation should be genuine.

Because there was still some need for clarity, including between Parliament and the Commission, I believe it is extraordinarily important that we have postponed a final vote today, so that the relevant committee can once again deliberate on how to make this motion as practical as possible.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, I voted for this report because the negative impact of the economic crisis on the countries in the region is still felt. In this context, many countries still need donor support. I agree with the rapporteur that certain changes are needed in terms of macro-financial assistance to third countries. We need clear and transparent rules for a more efficient and faster decision-making process.

At the same time, these rules must be accompanied by the Commission's capacity to provide case-by-case support. We also need a better strengthening of political conditionality. Moreover, democratic interests should be as important as the economic and financial ones. Macro-financial assistance has contributed to maintaining stability in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and has positive impact on economy.

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Madam President, I voted in favour of the Kazak report on the general provisions for macro-financial assistance to third countries. The report stresses the need for transparency in instances where MFA is granted. But not only must the conditions for these provisions be clear, so too must its usage once the funds have actually been granted.

The External Action Service may well be able now to demonstrate its worth on this particular front, if it is to aid the Commission in its assessment of potential beneficiaries in third countries. Given that it is proposed that the countries benefiting from EU MFA must first sign a Memorandum of Understanding which will commit them to sharing some of the core values of the European Union – including democracy, the upholding of human rights, poverty reduction, fighting corruption and promoting good governance – I believe that the EU MFA may well be a useful tool in helping these countries in other ways other than just on the financial level.

Motion for a resolution: RC-B7-0235/2012

Iva Zanicchi (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, like all of my colleagues, I firmly condemn the harassment to which Yulia Tymoshenko has been subjected in prison and I sincerely hope that the Ukrainian authorities will ensure impartiality and transparency in the Supreme Court proceedings, which will decide the fate of the former Prime Minister and other politicians currently being held.

Let me add, however, that I am firmly opposed to boycotting the European Football Championships, as called for in recent days by some European politicians. Ethical values have always enabled sport to overcome many barriers and free it from political manipulation. Sport has always proved itself to be a means of achieving equality and brotherhood among peoples.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). – (RO) Madam President, I voted against this report and, in my opinion, Parliament is in an embarrassing situation. We are not a lobby group bound to act in favour of Ms Tymoshenko, but a Parliament that must honour and respect democratic principles. Stability and respect for state powers are vital in a democracy.

I believe we cannot intervene in the final conviction of a person, be it in a third country, while at the same time it is unbelievable that a resolution adopted by this Parliament should mention investigation commissions for the examination of possible restrictions of human rights in the case of Yulia Tymoshenko. I think Parliament should definitely change this attitude, since it is harmful to its status as representative of the people, and refrain from interfering in the judicial system of other countries, including Ukraine; finally, I believe such attitude is detrimental to the image of Parliament.

Marek Józef Gróbarczyk (ECR). – (PL) Madam President, I voted in favour of this report, since we should wholeheartedly oppose what is happening in Ukraine and the government's actions towards Ms Tymoszenko. However, it should also be noted that the Ukrainian Government would not act in this way or be in such a powerful position if it were not for

Russian support, and above all the Russian money which can rightly be said to support this regime and its actions. A few months ago, here in the European Parliament, we heard that this Russian money would help the European Union overcome the crisis. Without wishing to draw any negative inferences about Russia's intentions, I would like to remind everyone that we should not even be considering such a thing. Russia's approach, in particular as regards the European Union, is a negative one.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution because it is not just about the Tymoshenko case, but more fundamentally about the fact that every citizen, whether a typical member of the public or a member of the government or opposition, has the right to due process of law and this right has not been upheld in the Tymoshenko case, which is why we must protest and use every democratic means possible to make the world aware.

Secondly, I wanted to stress once again that I voted in favour. I also agree with paragraph 16, which expresses 'hope for the success of the European Football Championship 2012 in Poland and Ukraine'. Personally, however, I believe that European politicians have no business attending the Championship and should not even attend in a private capacity, as it is impossible to make this distinction.

Play football by all means. Hold the European Football Championship by all means. The politicians should stay away, however.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, I voted in favour of this resolution because Ukrainian authorities should cease to prosecute opposition members on political grounds. The former Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, is in a very difficult situation, her health problems being aggravated by detention conditions; moreover, other opposition members are imprisoned, unjustly accused and put on trial.

The acts of selective justice we are currently witnessing in Ukraine do not comply with the rules of democracy and the rule of law. The EU must continue to denounce firmly all abuses and call on the Ukrainian Government to respect democratic principles and fundamental rights. We must take a stand for Yulia Tymoshenko, for the other members of the opposition, and, in particular, for all Ukrainians who are entitled to free, fair and democratic elections this autumn.

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Madam President, my group was pleased to vote in favour of the resolution on Ukraine. The resolution sends a clear message from our Parliament to Kiev. We will not tolerate the abuses that the Yanukovich regime is perpetrating upon Yulia Tymoshenko and opposition politicians. Gross manipulation of the judicial system, by selective justice, to remove political opposition at a time of elections – the parliamentary elections are due in June – is totally unacceptable to the European Union.

My group, the ECR, is saddened to learn that Mrs Tymoshenko may also now face a murder charge. It is interesting that the US investigators, when they prosecuted ex-Prime Minister Lazarenko, dismissed this allegation regarding Tymoshenko and I am very suspicious of this timing. I have also learned that the country's Chief Prosecutor has been given direct political orders by the President to pursue their former Premier and other government opponents. So I am now calling upon the England football team to consider boycotting all scheduled Euro 2012 fixtures in Ukraine in protest and to play the matches instead in co-hosting Poland, Ukraine's neighbour.

Ultimately, we want Ukraine to grow into a modern European state and eventually to join the European Union, but that will require much higher standards of political behaviour than we have seen of late.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, this is a point of order under Article 15 of the Treaty on European Union.

Last night there was an informal European Council meeting, and I am sorry that the President of the European Council did not come this morning, in compliance with this article, to report on that meeting.

Report: Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (A7-0161/2012)

George Lyon (ALDE). – Madam President, today I voted in favour of developing stronger incentives for a more resource-efficient economy across Europe. Green growth through increased innovation, research and development and resource-efficient technologies, together with the right market incentives, have the potential to boost Europe's growth and competitiveness.

One of the key areas we need to tackle of course is food waste. Today at least 20% of the food produced in Europe goes in the bin; that is indeed a scandal. Both the public and private sectors need to do more to reduce waste along the food chain, but we almost need more research and innovation in the area of bio-waste reuse and recycling.

The report also calls on the Commission to introduce modern nutrient-management techniques in order to reduce nutrient loss and achieve a sustainable intensification of our agricultural production. That is absolutely crucial if we are to continue feeding a growing world population while at the same time reducing the inputs our farmers need to use at the moment. That agenda needs to be at the heart of the CAP reform.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE). – (LT) Madam President, I voted in favour of this document and hope that the guidelines it contains are followed. We talk a lot about the sustainable use of resources, we have strategies and have set ourselves objectives to be achieved in the field of green economic growth. It goes without saying that we have opportunities and needs. Satisfying the needs of European Union citizens is inseparable from the sustainable use of resources. I am not just talking about the Earth's resources, when we are generally talking about the sustainable use of resources, I am also talking about saving money. Sustainable use is only possible by introducing innovations and innovative solutions. We therefore need to pay adequate attention to research and create conditions for the private sector to cooperate with scientists because this would bring about a vibrant innovations sector leading to the sustainable use of resources. I believe that we could learn how to do this, how to create a vibrant innovations sector, from certain countries outside the European Union, in this case Israel, which is excellent at handling cooperation with the research and innovations sectors.

Christa Kläß (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, in yesterday's sitting, I made a strong call for more efficient use of resources and yet I have been forced to vote against the report today as it simply contains too much bureaucracy. There are a lot of technicalities included. We will be faced with even more bureaucracy. We have added new mandatory contributions. We have demanded indicators and statistics. All of this goes far beyond our objective. We have not yet reached a point where we can impose a complete ban on landfill

in Europe. Not everything can be reused. Thus, the report has overshot the mark. When it comes to taxation we must also think things over more carefully.

For this reason, I voted against the report, although I would like to emphasise once again: I am in favour of resource efficiency. I am in favour of new approaches. Attempting to introduce them in the area of taxation, however, is simply too much. Unfortunately I made a mistake over the fifth point. I would like it to be known that I actually meant to vote against it.

Motion for a resolution: B7-0233/2012

Anthea McIntyre (ECR). – Madam President, my UK Conservative colleagues and I fully agree with the objective of tackling youth unemployment and believe the EU has a role in assisting Member States, but the best way of tackling this problem is not by micro-managing Member States.

The EU must add value to the work already done by Member States, not duplicate it. For example, the UK has already put in place a series of initiatives in the new Youth Contract, with a commitment of almost GBP 1 billion over the next three years. The EU should promote best practice, ensure proper functioning and completion of the single market and, above all, remove barriers to growth in the form of the red tape which prevents businesses from taking on young people.

We agree with much that is in this resolution. However, we have concerns with other aspects, including: attempts to pre-empt the final outcome of the negotiations on the Maternity Leave Directive; calls to define minimum standards at European level in the area of employment and social affairs; calls for more ambitious sources of additional financing; and calls for the EU Youth Guarantee Scheme to be legally enforceable. Taking these concerns into account, we voted against this resolution.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE). – (LT) Madam President, I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution because youth unemployment is one of the most pressing economic problems of recent times. The European Commission's initiative, which aims to promote youth employability in other EU Member States, is something to be welcomed. The high number of people still registering demonstrates that such a project really was essential. However, I would like to draw attention to another matter – migratory flows are being felt in many European Union Member States that is a considerable number of people of working age are seeking work in other EU Member States. Of course, I am not calling for the creation of barriers to this movement because young people have the right to choose where to work and fulfil themselves, but I nevertheless call for more attention and resources to be paid to measures that would encourage youth entrepreneurship in their own countries, and would encourage employers to create jobs specifically for young people so that those young people are not forced to leave their countries of origin.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Madam President, I was pleased to support this resolution here today. I think it is very important, at a time when youth unemployment is higher than we have ever seen in the European Union, that we should be engaging in discussions and undertaking initiatives to try and help reduce it.

We probably have the best-educated potential workforce of young people in the world. They have studied hard, and now they find – right across the European Union – that they cannot get a job. In my country, more than 20% of the youth are unemployed and this is

most unfortunate, but at least we are trying to do something about it, and it is important that we create awareness of the initiatives we have, so that young people can avail of them.

On the broader front, it is important that secondary-level schools and third-level institutions should be more geared to the market, particularly in the future, so that young people can engage in courses and follow a direction which will lead to employment sooner rather than later.

Report: Edit Bauer (A7-0160/2012)

Mitro Repo (S&D). – (FI) Madam President, it is incomprehensible that Europe has failed to implement one of the oldest principles in EU law, and one for which the Court of Justice of the European Union has granted a direct legal effect. For too long, mere fine words have failed to result in any real action.

I welcome this report, as it contains some concrete proposals for narrowing the pay gap between women and men. More effective legislation is needed to correct the state of affairs, for example in the form of greater powers for equality bodies. To achieve equal pay, the EU must adopt a robust role in improving legislation and coordinating policies.

It is important that the European Parliament continues to have an active role in implementing equality between men and women. Awareness-raising campaigns need to continue, and we should also continue to inform people of their rights. I would like to remind everyone that we as individual Members of Parliament may also have a significant role to play in this work.

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Madam President, I voted against the Bauer report on equal pay for men and women. The fact that statistics show that wage discrimination is still very much present throughout the EU is of course extremely concerning, and I feel strongly that there is no place for discrimination in pay matters on the basis of gender, race, religion or sexual orientation in today's society.

Despite this, I am convinced that employment law covering pay should be the preserve of the national governments of our Member States. I oppose, as do British Conservatives, the notion that laws concerning pay as well as legislation covering related issues such as social security and pensions should be imposed on the Member States by the European Union. I believe that it is an issue for national governments and national parliaments to deal with on behalf of their own citizens.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – (GA) Madam President, it is sad in one way that we had to discuss this today, but we had an excellent discussion this morning. You would think that in this day and age there would be no difference between the salaries paid to men and women for the same work. But that is how it is, and we must end it as soon as we can. Therefore, it is a good thing that the proposals put before us here today were accepted.

One thing that I was a bit disappointed about was that we did not have a roll-call vote at the end so that we would know how many Members voted in favour and how many against. I know that there was a large majority in favour of this report, but we do not have the figures now and I think that a mistake.

Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, I support this resolution, although the quality of statistic data available should be improved. It is true that the gender pay gap has not decreased significantly over recent years, and large gaps still persist in this area. I

call upon the Member States and social partners to promote gender neutral employment policies and equal opportunities in order to ensure equal pay for equal work.

Women's career should not be affected by pregnancy or maternity leave. Furthermore, society should review wages in professional areas in which women predominate, such as education or health. Finally, of course, I would like to emphasise this: we need many more women in politics and in decision-making positions.

President. – That is certainly true.

Motion for a resolution: B7-0248/2012

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, I voted for this motion for a resolution because I believe certain clarifications are needed regarding the measures taken by the Swiss authorities. The legal ground for the introduction of transitional measures is unclear. Moreover, I believe nationality-based quotas that generate discrimination among European citizens should not be accepted. It is necessary to have a clear position from the Commission and an explanation regarding the adopted measures.

I believe the Swiss and EU legislation regarding the internal market should converge. I wish to draw attention to the need of examining measures that hinder the functioning of the internal market within the EU. At the same time, the Commission should provide an assessment of the current situation and concrete answers based thereupon.

Written explanations of vote

Report: Metin Kazak (A7-0157/2012)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I am voting for this report, as I agree with the argument that the democratic effectiveness of macro-financial assistance (MFA) should be enhanced through the inclusion of an explicit mention of democratic- and human rights-policy measures in the Memorandum of Understanding, which should be used as conditionality; in other words, it should be possible for third countries not respecting these principles to be subject to penalties or the reimbursement of the funds allocated by the EU. Moreover, there is a need for the MFA to be clearer and more efficient, and for democratic process to be stepped up, including the involvement of Parliament, which should give its consent based on preconditions that must be agreed on before the EU signs a Memorandum of Understanding with a third country.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) European Union macro-financial assistance (MFA) was introduced in 1990 with the aim of providing financial assistance to third countries whose balance of payments was in short-term difficulties. However, the Treaty of Lisbon extended Parliament's powers and MEPs now codecide on a wider range of subjects. I therefore voted for the harmonisation of the decision-making procedures relating to EU macro-financial assistance. The proposal would also introduce quicker, more efficient and streamlined decision making for individual MFA operations.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this report. Macro-financial assistance (MFA) was launched in 1990 to grant financial assistance to third countries experiencing short-term balance of payments difficulties. A total of 55 MFA decisions benefiting 23 countries have so far been approved, amounting to EUR 7.2 billion, in the form of grants or loans. It is important to create a formal legal instrument for MFAs to third countries and introduce quicker and more efficient decision

making for individual MFA operations. I welcome the proposal to update and clarify some of the rules, particularly on the geographical scope of MFA. As for political conditionality, I agree that when delivering MFA the EU has little regard for political pre-conditions. I therefore welcome the European Parliament's proposals to pay sufficient attention to the EU's democratic interests and respect for political conditions, and to reduce or halt the delivery of assistance in cases where these conditions are not observed. I also agree that the EP should give its approval to each MFA decision and monitor the funding allocated effectively.

Adam Bielan (ECR), in writing. – (PL) The programme of macro-financial assistance for third countries experiencing temporary difficulties with their balance of payments has been in place for over two decades, and is an excellent way of developing mutual relations. This assistance has made a valuable contribution to macro-economic stability, particularly in neighbouring countries. The Treaty of Lisbon made it easier to implement such measures, and I am happy to say that countries including Ukraine and Moldova have benefited in this respect. I hope that this will also be the case for Georgia.

I agree that we need to put in place the right criteria for selecting beneficiaries. Although the programme's aim is stability and 'Europeanisation' in our neighbours, the main recipients should be countries hoping one day to join the EU. A quicker and more effective procedure for deciding whether to grant assistance and a more detailed geographical scope will mean that the policy can be implemented much more effectively in neighbouring countries, and that it may one day play a leading role in the field of macro-financial assistance. I voted in favour of the resolution.

Marielle de Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) For too long the European Union has turned a blind eye to neighbouring countries that show no respect for fundamental rights or democracy. Now that situation must change. Thanks to this resolution, respect for fundamental rights will be a non-negotiable pre-condition for granting macro-financial assistance to third countries. The funds received will have to be automatically reinvested in sectors linked to human rights. Parliament calls on the Commission, through the intermediary of the European External Action Service (EEAS), to monitor closely how the funds are used by neighbouring countries so as to ensure respect for human rights.

Christine De Veyrac (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of this text, which clarifies the rules that must be respected by neighbouring countries in difficulty that wish to benefit from EU financial assistance under the umbrella of macro-financial assistance (MFA). Now that our countries have undertaken more rigorous management of their own finances and public policies, the European Union must equip itself with the crucial resources needed to ensure that its financial assistance has a genuine positive impact on the economic and social development of the countries or territories that receive it, and that its action thus promotes our democratic values and our sound economic and social practices.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) This report concerns the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general provisions for macro-financial assistance (MFA) to third countries. EU MFA was launched in 1990 to grant financial assistance to third countries experiencing short-term balance of payments difficulties. So far, a total of 55 MFA decisions benefiting 23 countries have been approved, totalling EUR 7.2 billion, in the form of grants or loans, or a combination of the two. Since MFA is one of the main sources, if not the main source of external finance for third countries,

I consider it vital to create a formal legal instrument for granting such aid, so that it is implemented in a streamlined and regulated way.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) The EU's macro-financial assistance has been provided since 1990 as assistance of a macro-economic nature to third countries experiencing short-term balance of payments difficulties. A total of 55 MFA decisions benefiting 23 countries have so far been approved, amounting to EUR 7.2 billion, in the form of grants or loans, or a combination of the two. Until now, the EU has taken MFA decisions based on the basis of the 'Genval criteria' of October 2002 which have been subject to case-by-case legislative decisions. Deeming this situation unsatisfactory, the EP's resolution of 2003 called for a regulatory framework to be drawn up and the Commission's proposal thus comes as a direct response to this demand. In its staff working paper, the Commission expressed its concerns over the current situation of case by-case legislative decisions, particularly in light of the mandatory eight week consultation of the national parliaments. Although MFA has made a valuable contribution to macro-economic stability in the EU's neighbourhood, current procedures tend to reduce its effectiveness and transparency. I believe that certain changes will be necessary to establish clear rules and make MFA decision making simpler and more efficient. However, I consider the total removal of parliamentary scrutiny and the introduction of implementing acts for MFA to be unacceptable.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) It is useful in my view to simplify and speed up the macro-financial assistance procedure, just as I agree with the rapporteur on the need to strike a balance between the need for clear rules and allowing the Commission to tailor its assistance to specific situations. Moreover, I welcome the fact that Article 6 of the Commission's proposal conditions the granting of such assistance to recipient countries that have effective democratic mechanisms, and are based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. For these reasons, my vote will be in favour.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour because the EU's macro-financial assistance (MFA) was launched in 1990 to grant financial assistance to third countries experiencing short-term balance of payments difficulties. A total of 55 MFA decisions benefiting 23 countries have so far been approved, amounting to EUR 7.2 billion, in the form of grants or loans, or a combination of the two. Eligible countries include candidates for EU membership, potential candidates, ENP countries and, in exceptional circumstances, additional third countries which are politically, economically and geographically close to the EU. Taking its lead from the Genval Criteria, the Regulation makes MFA support conditional on the presence of 'effective democratic mechanisms, including multi-party parliamentary systems, the rule of law and respect for human rights'. The Genval criteria make MFA assistance conditional on shared democratic, economic and geographical proximity, as well as the existence of an IMF scheme and financial discipline. According to the Commission, the main goals of its proposal are: to create a formal legal instrument for MFAs to third countries, to introduce quicker, more efficient and streamlined decision making for individual MFA operations, to agree rules and conditions among the EU institutions (to make the EP 'co-owner of the rules'), to update and clarify some of the rules, most notably on the geographical scope of MFA, and also to align decision making for MFA with other external financial assistance instruments.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR), *in writing.* – (PL) In common with the rest of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, I support the main premises of the Kazak report, which confirms the European Parliament's position on questions raised previously

regarding macro-financial assistance for individual third countries. The initial conditions for granting extraordinary financial aid should be set out clearly, and should include in particular improved transparency as regards use of funds (loans, grants or a combination of the two) and formal political assessments of the status of beneficiaries, carried out by the Commission in cooperation with the EEAS, in order to increase the democratic effectiveness of the EU's macro-financial assistance and to improve democratic scrutiny of the latter.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) European Union macro-financial assistance was introduced in 1990 to provide financial support to third countries experiencing short-term balance of payment difficulties. To date, macro-financial assistance has been provided on the basis of individual resolutions. This means that each financial assistance operation requires a separate legislative resolution. Since 2003, the European Parliament has continuously called for a framework regulation to allow macro-financial assistance to be processed on a uniform basis. I voted in favour of the report because a formal legal instrument for macro-financial assistance to third countries increases the effectiveness of macro-financial assistance by tightening up the decision-making process. The proposed regulation will also formalise, update and specify the basic rules that apply to macro-financial assistance.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) MFA (macro-financial assistance) requires some revisions at a legal and regulatory level in order to continue carrying out its unique mission, that of supporting third countries, in the most effective and tangible way. MFA should be – and the report moves in that direction – an instrument that is not additional to the work already done by the International Monetary Fund for third countries, but an added value securing the cooperation of European financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF). Moreover, assessment of MFA needs to be contingent and take carefully into account the bureaucratic and operational variables that individual Member States put into place, which sometimes cause delays in the use of these funds, thus negating the effects and reducing the effectiveness of MFA.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The EU is in a position to provide financial support to countries in need of such assistance, but the large number of grants and loans we have provided so far forces us to review existing legislation that allows us to do this in cooperation with the IMF. Starting from this assumption, I support the Commission's proposal to clarify the decision-making procedure, but I do not agree that Parliament should no longer play any role in this process. Parliament must be part of these decisions, at least in its capacity of consultative body; we must be informed of the Commission's and Council's decisions. Therefore, I support the proposal of the rapporteur to use delegated acts for each and every case of macro-financial assistance. I also agree that this Regulation should not be simply transitional. Again, I support the idea of the rapporteur proposing an open term, while requiring that the Regulation be reviewed every four years, taking into account the economic changes.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I would like to stress that macro-financial assistance (MFA) must bring EU added value and should apply only where the EU can bring something to the table, rather than functioning as an 'International Monetary Fund top-up'. Thus, by decoupling MFA from the existence of an IMF scheme, the EU will have greater freedom to provide added value. The EU could, in certain cases, consider taking the lead role in MFA operations. Furthermore, the joint Centre for European Policy Studies and London School of Economics study commissioned by the EP notes that the amount of MFA is often too

small to guarantee the implementation of policy measures adopted under the relevant memorandum of understanding. The report therefore proposes that, in most cases, the EU's contribution should not fall below a minimum percentage, thus ensuring that it is sufficient to secure added value and making it easier for large countries to benefit from MFA.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I find it entirely reasonable that Union macro-financial assistance should be used to provide exceptional financial assistance to third countries that have run into temporary balance of payment difficulties.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Since 1990, macro-financial assistance (MFA) has supported third countries experiencing short-term balance of payments difficulties. This assistance may be granted in the form of grants or loans, or a combination of the two, and has already been granted 55 times to 23 different countries. This report seeks to make MFA more effective, adopting and establishing clear rules and conditions for payment. I agree that it is right to seek quicker and more effective solutions for making use of this instrument, which is essential for helping neighbouring countries that are experiencing difficulties.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (ES) I voted against this report because I am opposed to the EU giving financial assistance to certain countries on condition that they make the structural changes to their democratic, government, institutional or party systems that the EU wants. With this macro-financial assistance, the EU is once again interfering in the sovereignty of third countries, which amounts to blackmail. Moreover, the fact that this financial aid always goes hand in hand with aid from the International Monetary Fund shows what kind of reforms will be demanded from those countries: a market economy, labour deregulation and privatisation of the public sector. Under no circumstances can I accept that the EU forces third countries to adopt the very measures that have led us into this crisis.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – The main goals of proposal are: to create a formal legal instrument for micro-financial assistance to third countries; to introduce quicker, more efficient and streamlined decision making for individual micro-financial assistance operations; to agree rules and conditions among the EU institutions (to make the EP 'co-owner of the rules'); to update and clarify some of the rules, most notably on the geographical scope of micro-financial assistance; to align decision making for micro-financial assistance with other external financial assistance instruments. I would suggest paying attention to countries neighbouring the EU.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) EU macro-financial assistance was introduced in 1990 to provide aid in the event of temporary balance of payment difficulties in third countries. Relevant resolutions were included in the Treaty of Lisbon for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. The legal basis is now under discussion. This proposal would do away with the need to consult with national parliaments and would lead to a loss of transparency. EU financial assistance is often characterised by a lack of transparency and controls. As the present proposal offers no prospect of an improvement in this regard and could possibly be used to undermine discipline in financial policy by the back door, I have voted against it.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), *in writing.* – (LT) The EU's macro-financial assistance (MFA) is an important instrument enabling the EU to help third countries and territories meet the demands caused by urgent economic crises swiftly and by creating

added value, while at the same time strengthening commitments to common values with the Union, including democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, the fight against forced child labour, support for sustainable development, poverty reduction, the fight against corruption, as well as to the principles of open, rules-based and fair trade. It is a short-term instrument, usually applied for three years, and may be reviewed if financing needs should be reduced. It is important to establish clear eligibility criteria for third countries and territories and to confer additional powers on the Commission, while ensuring democratic scrutiny, informing the European Parliament properly and in a timely manner and providing an evaluation of implementation every four years.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing*. – (EL) The EU has been providing macro-financial assistance (MFA) since 1990 to third countries facing short-term balance-of-payment problems. So far, over 20 countries have received assistance in the form of loans or grants totalling in excess of EUR 7 billion. However, the European Parliament recently asked for a specific framework regulation for MFA and the Commission responded to that request which, among other things, calls for the creation of an official legal instrument and a more effective and rational decision-making procedure in this sector. However, the Commission proposal has a number of omissions and confuses certain actions, for example by allowing the IMF to be involved in such actions to the point at which it basically demotes the EU to a supplementary role. This report highlights these points, which is why I voted in favour of it.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Abstention. The EU's macro-financial assistance (MFA) was launched in 1990 to grant financial assistance to third countries experiencing short-term balance of payments difficulties. A total of 55 MFA decisions benefiting 23 countries have so far been approved, amounting to EUR 7.2 billion, in the form of grants or loans, or a combination of the two. In recent years INTA has been involved in granting MFA first under the consultation procedure and, since the Lisbon Treaty, as colegislator. Under the Treaty of Lisbon, the appropriate legal bases for decisions granting MFA are Articles 209(1) and 212(2) TFEU, depending on whether the beneficiary country is a developing country or not. In both cases, OLP applies. Given the diminishing importance of the MFA instrument, we regard any attempt to establish own EU conditionalities for MFA in the EU Neighbourhood and monitor their implementation as an administrative task of for the EU which is out of proportion to the real amounts involved in MFA operations and adding considerable burdens also for the administrations of the receiving countries.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of this report because the new general provisions increase the effectiveness of macro-financial assistance (MFA) and specify rules concerning its geographical scope. This regulation proposes setting up a legal instrument for MFA to third countries, bringing the decisions into line with those of other external instruments of financial assistance. The report also establishes a minimum percentage of the contribution of the European Union in the majority of cases, ensuring added value and facilitating the use of MFA to larger countries.

Matteo Salvini (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the report. I think it is right that at last we have a general legislative instrument valid for any future macro-financial assistance for third countries. I supported the main proposals made by the rapporteur, even though I did not share his concern regarding the need to involve our Parliament more fully in future measures of macro-financial assistance. In my opinion, the procedure initially proposed by the European Commission, which provided for the involvement of the Council but not of the European Parliament could have been maintained. However, the members

of the Committee on International Trade preferred to bring in changes that will make negotiations with the Council very long and difficult to resolve. I express my hope, in any case, that the rapporteur will be successful in the negotiations with the colegislator.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The European Union's macro-financial assistance (MFA), launched in 1990 to grant financial assistance to third countries experiencing short-term balance of payments difficulties, has so far approved 55 decisions benefiting 23 countries, amounting to EUR 7.2 billion in the form of grants, loans or a combination of the two. This vote seeks to achieve the following objectives: to create a formal legal instrument for MFAs to third countries; to introduce quicker, more efficient and streamlined decision making for individual MFA operations; to agree rules and conditions among the EU institutions; to update and clarify some of the rules, most notably on the geographical scope of MFA; and to align decision making for MFA with other external financial assistance instruments.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The Commission's proposal seeks to create a formal legal instrument for granting macro-financial assistance (MFA) to third countries, and to establish quicker, more efficient and streamlined decision making for individual operations. In order to do this, it is necessary to agree rules and conditions among the EU institutions, to update some of the rules on the geographical scope of MFA, and to align MFA decision making with other external financial assistance instruments. Today Parliament adopted a document, for which I voted, stating that the MFA must bring the EU added value, and should only occur where the EU can bring something to the table. For example, by decoupling MFA from the existence of an IMF scheme, the EU will have greater freedom to provide added value, thus allowing it to take the leading role in MFA operations. Therefore, in most cases the EU's contribution should not fall beneath a minimum percentage, so that it is sufficient to ensure added value and makes it easier for countries to benefit from MFA.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the proposal for a regulation laying down general provisions for macro-financial assistance to third countries. The framework regulation aims at clarifying the rules and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Union assistance. Macro-financial assistance is a tool of Union foreign policy and should serve to enhance the visibility and influence of the Union beyond its borders; it should be used to provide exceptional financial assistance to third countries that have run into temporary balance of payment difficulties. Unlike other Union instruments providing direct support for its external policies (such as the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the Development Cooperation Instrument, etc.), macro-financial assistance should not be used to provide regular financial support nor have as its primary aim supporting the economic and social development of the beneficiary countries. Macro-financial assistance should include measures to improve the beneficiary countries' commitment to common values with the Union, including democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, the fight against forced child labour, support for sustainable development and poverty reduction, as well as to the principles of open, rules-based and fair trade. The fulfilment of these objectives should be regularly monitored by the Commission.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) EU macro-financial assistance (MFA) was created in 1990 to provide resources to third countries experiencing temporary balance of payments difficulties. This assistance may be granted in the form of grants or loans, or a combination of the two. The EU's assistance programme is necessarily associated with

financial assistance provided by the IMF, at around 10% of the IMF amount. We voted against this report because MFA is tied to the IMF criteria; the same criteria that are condemning countries to poverty through the financial discipline, structural adjustments, and economic and social conditions that it demands. Financial assistance is predominantly aimed at funding the recommendations made by the IMF and its policy of structural adjustment; that is, its insistence on the very same neoliberal policies that brought about the economic and financial crisis, and are now exacerbating it. Policies of economic cooperation are needed, rather than blackmailing countries in economic difficulties.

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Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I am voting for this report, as I consider it vital that the Ukrainian authorities ensure full respect for the rights of all prisoners, including Ms Tymoshenko, Mr Lutsenko and Mr Ivashchenko. Moreover, I believe the adoption of a reformed penal code to be positive, as it is a significant step in the process of reforming the legal and judicial system, and of Ukraine's rapprochement with the EU. I also believe that the establishment of a constituent assembly is a very positive step, as are the efforts to ensure that the parliamentary elections in October 2012 will be free and fair. Respect for fundamental rights and freedoms in Ukraine is a key step towards ensuring that this association agreement will provide a crucial tool for modernisation and a road map for steering domestic reforms and national reconciliation, which will help the country to overcome recent negative trends.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D), *in writing.* – I abstained in the vote on this text because although I support its quest for the reform of the Ukrainian legal and judiciary system, I believe that the linkage between the situation of human rights in Ukraine and the prosecution of Yulia Tymoshenko could be misleading. I support the demand for a fair trial for Ms Tymoshenko, but I dissent from the idea of connecting our relationship with Ukraine with the Tymoshenko case. I am also afraid that this text could give the impression that the former Prime Minister of Ukraine deserves to be supported as if she was a champion of freedom and justice in her country. She is not. As a member of the dominant oligarchy, Mrs Tymoshenko lost an internal fight with people no better than her.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I was appalled by Ukraine's attitude and I therefore voted in favour of the joint resolution seeking the 'unconditional immediate' release of all Ukrainian political prisoners. Kiev must respect fully the legal and human rights of the defendants and detainees. I am very concerned about the judicial proceedings against former and current high-ranking government officials; it is essential that they respect European standards of fairness, impartiality, transparency and independence. One woman has become the symbol of imprisonment 'on politically motivated grounds': former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. As the October parliamentary elections approach, we wish to establish an international election observation mission. As far as Euro 2012 is concerned, all European politicians who wish to attend matches in Ukraine must make their awareness of the political situation in the country publicly clear and seek opportunities to visit political detainees in prison, or attend in a purely private capacity.

Ivo Belet (PPE), *in writing.* – (NL) I am very pleased that we have today, with a large majority, called on all policy makers who will be going to the European Football Championship in Ukraine to condemn the political situation in that country when they arrive there. We are asking them to publicly voice their concerns regarding the political situation in Ukraine and to use this opportunity to visit political prisoners there, if at all

possible. The trial of Yulia Tymoshenko has again been postponed, this time until the end of June, after the European Football Championship in Ukraine and Poland ends. The Ukrainian Government wants to keep the trial out of the spotlight of the international press. However, in so doing, it is achieving the exact opposite of what it intended. I realise that it is best to keep sport and politics separate, but in this case we simply cannot look the other way. On 13 June, the Netherlands will be playing Germany in Kharkiv. The stadium in Kharkiv is two kilometres from the prison where Yulia Tymoshenko is locked up. At this time as politicians and, even, as players, we cannot act as though this is none of our concern.

Adam Bielan (ECR), *in writing.* – (PL) In around a fortnight's time, Ukraine and Poland will host the Euro 2012 tournament and become the centre of Europe. I very much hope that this will be a time when we concentrate on football alone, since this event represents a huge opportunity for both countries to promote themselves, and for Ukraine this will mean drawing closer to Europe. The case of Yulia Tymoshenko has understandably caused outrage, which has overshadowed Kiev's pro-European ambitions. I am saddened by reports that the former prime minister has been treated wrongly and even brutally, all the more so because I have endeavoured for many years to act as Ukraine's spokesperson within the European Parliament.

The Council has already refused to ratify the association agreement in view of these events. I hope that the former prime minister's appeal will be heard fairly and transparently, in accordance with democratic standards. I believe that strong links with Europe are still a priority for the Ukrainian authorities and that they do not intend to drift towards Belarus. I support the resolution.

Jan Březina (PPE), *in writing.* – (CS) The Ukrainian authorities must guarantee the impartiality of the cassation process in the case of Ms Tymoshenko, and must end the use of selective justice targeting political and other opponents. I am suspicious about the fact that the High Specialised Court of Ukraine on Criminal and Civil Cases has postponed its ruling on the cassation appeal in Ms Tymoshenko's case against the decision of Pechersk District Court in Kiev. In this context, we must warn against the protraction of due legal process. The Ukrainian authorities must ensure full respect for the right of all prisoners sentenced on politically motivated grounds, including Ms Tymoshenko, Mr Lutsenko and Mr Ivashchenko, including the right to adequate medical assistance in an appropriate institution, and the right of unrestricted access to their lawyers and the right to be visited by relatives and other people, such as EU envoys. Ukraine must ensure full respect for the fundamental rights of defendants and detainees, including the right to medical care, in line with international standards. I condemn the use of force by prison guards against Ms Tymoshenko, and I recall Ukraine's undertaking to examine promptly and impartially any complaints of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Corina Crețu (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on Ukraine, since Ukraine is a country of strategic importance to the EU, given its size, resources, population and geographical location. Ukraine has a distinctive position in Europe, being a key regional actor which exerts considerable influence on the security, stability and prosperity of the whole continent, and it should therefore take political responsibility. The respect for civil freedoms, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, ensuring fair, impartial and independent legal processes and focus on internal reform are prerequisites for the further development of relations between the EU and Ukraine. At the same time, the sentencing on 11 October 2011 of Ukraine's former Prime Minister, Yulia

Tymoshenko, to seven years in prison and the trials of other high officials of the former government are unacceptable and represent an act of selective justice, showing serious deficiencies with regard to the independence of the judiciary and the lack of reform in all aspects of the judicial process: prosecution, trial, sentencing, detention and appeals.

Marielle de Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) The worrying fate of Yulia Tymoshenko should cause us to reflect on our relationship with Ukraine, a neighbour of the EU that one day hopes to become a Member State. The situation of the former Ukrainian Prime Minister, jailed since November 2010, says a great deal about how justice operates in that country: poor prison conditions, failure to recognise the presumption of innocence, threat to her physical well-being, and so on. Through this motion for a resolution, Parliament seeks to demonstrate that it will never turn a blind eye to a state that does not respect fundamental rights and freedoms, and it calls on the Ukrainian Government to respect the rights of Yulia Tymoshenko.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I welcome the adoption of the motion for a resolution on the political situation in Ukraine. Ukraine is of crucial importance for the EU. The European Parliament must encourage the EU's direct neighbours to incorporate the Community *acquis* on human rights, freedom of the press and democracy. It is therefore Parliament's duty to express concern about and condemn the current abuses in Ukraine, especially the situation regarding Yulia Tymoshenko. Consequently, I am calling for a much-needed reform of Ukraine's legal and judicial systems to enable them to operate free from any political influence. All those who have been detained on political grounds must be released immediately. They must also be allowed to receive adequate medical assistance to protect their health. As far as Euro 2012 is concerned, through this resolution I am asking all officials who wish to attend matches in Ukraine to do so in a private capacity and to denounce, as far as possible, the political situation in the country.

Ismail Ertug (S&D), *in writing.* – (DE) The Tymoshenko case and political developments in Ukraine in general indicate that democracy and the rule of law still remain values that cannot be taken for granted in today's Europe and for which we must actively campaign.

The thirst for reform seemed enormous in Ukraine in the period following the Orange Revolution and the country quickly became a perfect example of the success of European neighbourhood policy. In this context I find it extremely regrettable that political life in Ukraine is once again characterised by political trials, political meddling in the administration of justice and state interference.

The response of the European Commission and a number of Member States to the latest events is decisive but by no means excessive. The absence of the most senior Members of the Commission from the European Championship in Ukraine sets down a clear marker, but should not divert attention from the problems in the country and the possible solutions. For this reason I welcome your intention, Mr Füle, to continue with the association process with Ukraine if there are positive developments and, above all, if free and fair elections are held this autumn.

In order to be able to provide positive support for developments in Ukraine in future, European neighbourhood policy must also incorporate the wishes and expectations of the people of Ukraine. Before we intensify our partnership, however, Yulia Tymoshenko must be given fair treatment. Naturally this must take her health into consideration and must be free from all state interference.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) In December of last year, I wrote that the relationship of trust between the EU and Ukraine was at one of its most fragile points, and that the timing of the adoption and ratification of the association agreement that the parties had been preparing, which would allow for a greater rapprochement between the two parties, might be put in jeopardy. Unfortunately, this deadlock has remained. Ukraine should give a clear signal that it intends to deepen its relations with the EU, and to make the issues of democracy, human rights and the rule of law its top priorities in its reform process.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Human rights violations in Ukraine have been debated on various occasions in Parliament. Although Ukraine has expressed its desire to join the EU, the fact is that the negotiation process has not been moving forwards at the desired speed because the Ukrainian authorities have not provided sufficient evidence of wanting to carry out reforms, instead seeking to hinder the process, in particular with regard to making its institutions democratic and ensuring fundamental freedoms. One good example of the lack of respect for fundamental freedoms and guarantees is the case of Yulia Tymoshenko, the former prime minister, who has been imprisoned for political reasons and is in very poor health. I voted for and welcome the adoption of this joint motion for a resolution, tabled pursuant to Rule 110 of the Rules of Procedure, replacing the motions for resolutions by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group. A country which advocates a European perspective must make progress with implementing democracy. Persecution on political grounds and a lack of respect for the rule of law are unacceptable. Any EU-Ukraine agreement must make absolutely clear that complete respect for the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is essential.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) This resolution incorporates aspects of previous resolutions, both about Ukraine and about other neighbouring countries. Once again, it adopts the usual posture of interference and manipulation of events, seeking to bring them into line with its vision of reality so as best to serve the interests of the major EU powers. Yulia Tymoshenko was on the frontline of the colour 'revolutions' in Ukraine, driven by support from the EU, the US and NATO. The current regime is stubbornly refusing to fulfil the role that the major powers of the EU, the US and NATO had reserved for the country's authorities. It should be remembered that Ukraine is pivotal to the geostrategic interests of certain EU powers, particularly in energy terms. What is certain is that the liberalisation and privatisation processes have led to the disproportionate enrichment of a few, under the shadow of the local oligarchy, while all the vast majority of the Ukrainian people have experienced is society moving backwards. There is no mention of that in this resolution: the majority in Parliament has not spoken a single word about it.

Carlo Fidanza (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The conditions under which former Ukrainian Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, has, for months, been imprisoned and suffered various forms of physical and psychological violence are unacceptable. First of all, we must urge the Ukrainian authorities to ensure full adherence to the fundamental rights of their prisoners, guaranteeing fair treatment, adequate medical assistance in an appropriate facility, unrestricted visits by relatives and sufficient access to their lawyers. This situation affects the relationship between the EU and Ukraine; I therefore consider that the authorities in Kiev should not ignore what we are saying in this Parliament, which is yet another

position statement following on from numerous interventions from the highest officials of the European institutions and Member States.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) With regard to the situation in the Ukraine, I firmly believe that it is necessary to communicate in a broader context, and not to link the current situation with Yulia Tymoshenko. I am disappointed with the situation in question. That is to say, all measures that the EU is today blaming the Ukrainian Government for could have been carried out by the former prime minister and leader of the opposition. If we criticise the Ukraine, the criticism should be justified and constructive, and focused on measures that benefit all the citizens of the country and that absolutely do not benefit only the imprisoned Yulia Tymoshenko. It is right to strive to build the best possible relations between the European Union and the Ukraine. In my opinion, however, it is not justified to criticise the fact that the former prime minister was accused and subsequently tried for mismanagement of state assets. If there were similar measures in our Member States, I strongly believe that European citizens would appreciate the conviction of political leaders for similar improper and irresponsible management of state assets.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution on Ukraine because Ukraine is a country of strategic importance to the EU – its size, resources, population and geographical location give it a distinctive position in Europe, making it a key regional actor which exerts considerable influence on the security, stability and prosperity of the whole continent. A comprehensive reform of some of the judiciary and measures to ensure respect for the rule of law in criminal investigations and prosecutions, including the principle of fair, impartial and independent judicial proceedings, has not yet been implemented in Ukraine. Prosecutions and investigations must be impartial and independent and must not be used for political ends. The protection of human rights and the rule of law must be consolidated. Strengthening the rule of law and an independent judiciary, as well as initiating a credible fight against corruption, are essential not only to the deepening of EU-Ukraine relations but also to the consolidation of democracy in Ukraine. Ukraine must respect fully the legal and human rights of defendants and detainees, including the right to medical care, in line with international standards.

Philippe Juvin (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Ukraine has a special position in Europe that gives it a key role in the region and an influence on the security, stability and prosperity of the continent as a whole. Respect for human rights in Ukraine and for civil liberties, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law is a precondition for any further development of its relations with the European Union. Unfortunately, it is clear that the independence of the judiciary is not guaranteed. I believe that the sentencing of Yulia Tymoshenko, the former Ukrainian Prime Minister, to seven years in prison is unacceptable, not to mention the proceedings against other former government officials, and I therefore decided to support this resolution in plenary.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR), *in writing.* – I welcome the EP's resolution on the case of Yulia Tymoshenko because I believe that the proper place for the leader of the opposition is not in jail, but in the Verkhovna Rada. When we address Ukraine within the EU, we need to be very careful to differentiate between the people of Ukraine and the Ukrainian authorities. Our critical assessment of the ongoing situation is not aimed at the Ukrainian people. Nor would I call the current government our sole 'target' of criticism. The system itself is largely at fault – partly as a result of years of failure and negligence to implement reforms. But today, selective justice is indeed at the forefront of Ukraine's troubles. We

need to uphold our cooperation, but continue to voice concerns. Unfortunately, the biggest casualty of what is taking place has been Ukraine's image.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE), in writing. – (FI) I voted in favour of the resolution on Ukraine, and Yulia Tymoshenko in particular. I have been following the Tymoshenko case with great concern, and I am delighted that both Parliament and Baroness Ashton have adopted a position on the matter. It is good that the Ukrainian authorities and the European Parliament have decided that medical specialists are to be sent to Ukraine to treat Tymoshenko. I am also pleased that a high-level observer is going to Ukraine to monitor the legal process. The Ukrainian Government should now understand that its selective sense of justice cannot be accepted. Tymoshenko's treatment is completely contrary to the spirit of the Association Agreement negotiations that are being held. There is a big difference between political responsibility and criminal liability. Furthermore, the Ukrainian authorities should consider the medical and psychological needs of prisoners, such as seeing relatives. Ukraine has shown that it is able to make political, institutional, economic and social reforms. The country must now also show that it can comply with the rule of law, and it must reform its penal system. The country also needs to eradicate corruption and the abuse of power. The Association Agreement being negotiated would act as an excellent road map for modernisation, national reforms and reconciliation. The football championships will be a splendid opportunity for Ukraine to demonstrate its sincerity in the context of the talks.

David Martin (S&D), in writing. – I voted for this resolution, which urges the Ukrainian authorities to ensure full respect for the right of all prisoners, including Ms Tymoshenko, Mr Lutsenko and Mr Ivashchenko, to adequate medical assistance in an appropriate institution; welcomes the transfer of Ms Tymoshenko to hospital in Kharkiv for necessary medical treatment under the supervision of German medical experts; calls on the Ukrainian authorities to create the conditions necessary for her successful treatment in accordance with the advice of the German medical experts; and also asks Ms Tymoshenko to cooperate fully in the prescribed treatment.

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), in writing. – (FR) The situation of Yulia Tymoshenko and her health are of great concern. The possibility of a boycott of Euro 2012 by European leaders does not seem to be enough. We must send a strong message to Ukraine. The rule of law must be respected. Yulia Tymoshenko has the right to a fair trial. She cannot be detained on political grounds alone, thereby making her the victim of persecution and political revenge. The independence of the judiciary must be preserved and access to proper medical care in prisons must always be guaranteed.

Mario Mauro (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The recent revelations about the inhumane prison treatment to which the former Ukrainian Prime Minister is being subjected make the situation no longer acceptable for us. With this motion for a resolution, we wish to remind Europe that Yulia Tymoshenko languishes in the Ukrainian prison system, serving an absurd and unjust sentence imposed by an antidemocratic and anachronistic regime. Ms Tymoshenko – whose health, moreover, is extremely poor – must be released immediately.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The European Parliament has decided to take a stand on the Ukrainian question by adopting a joint resolution calling upon the Ukrainian Government to grant the immediate release of Yulia Tymoshenko and opposition politicians, who were jailed after summary proceedings for political reasons and detained

in unacceptable conditions. Ukraine is a key country for the EU, but that does not justify any lack of respect for fundamental rights and for the most basic principles of democracy. The resolution makes the strengthening of the neighbourhood policy and the continuation of negotiations for accession subject to Ukraine's acceptance of certain preconditions. Parliament calls for the holding of free elections and for authorisation to send its own observers to follow all the voting procedures, so as to ensure that they are held freely and fairly and to gain access to the records, where necessary, and later for a process of reform to be initiated in the justice sector and the economy. The issue of taking part in the European Football Championships is deemed irrelevant and perhaps, if they are used for political ends, even counterproductive. This is against a background of evaluating whether it is appropriate to call for a boycott, which President Barroso has already announced he would like to do. I believe that this resolution is an act of political maturity on the part of Parliament.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) We are all aware that Ukraine is a country of strategic importance for the EU due to its size, its resources, its population and its geographical location. Ukraine occupies a unique position in Europe, making it a regional actor of the greatest importance, with a significant influence on the security, stability and prosperity of the whole continent. For this reason, it must assume its share of political responsibility. We must not forget Ukraine's human rights record, its respect for civil liberties, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, with the incorporation of fair, impartial and independent legal processes, and its focus on internal reform, which are prerequisites for the further development of EU-Ukraine relations. We must therefore condemn the position of the Ukrainian authorities in the Yulia Tymoshenko case, although we are now seeing slightly more openness on their part.

Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR), *in writing.* – (PL) The motion for a resolution on the situation in Ukraine raises the key issue of whether further reforms are needed in Ukraine. It emphasises that future elections must be free, fair and transparent, and this will be the case if leaders of the opposition are allowed to participate in them. It is noted that legislative reform is needed in view of the difficult situation faced by the former prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko. At the same time, however, the resolution does not make any call to boycott the Euro 2012 championship in Ukraine, in spite of the fact that several politicians have declared they will not participate in the celebrations. I believe that this is particularly important. Ukrainian society should have the opportunity to integrate with the EU, in line with the principle underpinning the European neighbourhood policy.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – I completely disagree with the text of the resolution and as a sign of protest I was absent during votes on this resolution.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) This motion for a resolution makes justified accusations against Ukraine in relation to a shortfall in the independence of the justice system, insufficient civil freedoms and a failure to respect the rule of law. It consistently fails to mention that these abuses also existed when Yulia Tymoshenko held the office of prime minister, however. The present situation simply reflects the other side of the same coin. This needs to be remembered when condemning the situation in Ukraine. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the resolution. Ms Tymoshenko is portrayed as an innocent lamb who is receiving entirely unjust treatment in every respect at the hands of her evil antagonists. It would be hard to surpass this one-sided assessment of the situation, but the question remains how the EU can possibly know in detail that all the current proceedings are subject to abuse for political purposes. The indiscriminate criticism from

the EU makes it relatively easy for those in government in Kiev to dismiss even the most justified accusations by pointing to the partisan support shown for Tymoshenko. The EU is once again making itself a laughing stock by threatening to boycott the European Football Championship. The use of sport as a weapon in political feuding is dubious and should be condemned. As in many other cases, the best thing for the EU would be simply to mind its own business.

Claudio Morganti (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of this joint resolution, which aims to raise awareness among the Ukrainian authorities on the case of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and in general on the issue of justice in that country. I am not in the habit of intervening in the internal affairs of another state, but in cases where there are flagrant violations of fundamental rights it is impossible to remain indifferent. In Ukraine, the judicial system has been used systematically as a political weapon to eliminate opponents: Ms Tymoshenko's trial is clear proof of that, and we cannot tolerate such actions by a state that is so close to Europe and with which Europe maintains a large number of relationships in various fields and sectors. Nor do I wish to enter into the controversy over whether or not to boycott the upcoming European Football Championships hosted jointly by Poland and Ukraine; but rather I wonder how it was possible to award them at the time, since we were already well aware of the many democracy-related problems present in the former Soviet republic.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) It is regrettable that Ukraine has seriously failed to understand the EU's warning and now that we have entered the final straight on the Association Agreement a serious crisis of confidence has arisen. However, we should prevent it from escalating. That would not benefit either side. I believe that the resolution is balanced – it clearly sets out the specific steps that the EP expects Ukraine to take. Ukraine must make immediate efforts and implement fundamental reforms so that it is possible to exit this situation: guarantee a transparent and fair appeal process, abolish relics of Soviet law, carry out legal reform and guarantee freedom of the press and assembly. At the same time the EU must maintain a dialogue and help Ukraine to stay on the path of reforms. The requirements to uphold standards on human rights must be applied consistently and uniformly to all partner countries, regardless of the level of cooperation.

Tiziano Motti (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the resolution on Ukraine because today a strong and symbolic woman languishes sick in a prison cell, who for all of us represents the misuse of the judiciary in a state, Ukraine, which is not a member of the EU but which in the 2011-2013 period will benefit from EUR 480 million allocated by Neighbourhood Policy programmes. Yulia Tymoshenko and her officials, leaders of the 'Orange Revolution' against the oppression of the regime, have been deprived of their liberty for speaking out on behalf of the many anonymous citizens who have, unsuccessfully, called for freedom of expression and the right to choose their own lifestyle and political representatives. Ukraine, which will be hosting the Football Championships in a month from now, has a great responsibility towards Europe: to prove that it wishes to address its democratic deficit, a prerequisite for it to be able to apply to become a full member of the European Union.

Katarína Neveďalová (S&D), *in writing*. – (SK) The case of the former prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, is successfully attracting the attention of the local and global media. Ms Tymoshenko was the leading representative of the opposition, and also became one of the symbols of the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine. Last year, Ms Tymoshenko was arrested on a charge of corruption in connection with the signing of an allegedly

disadvantageous contract for the import of Russian gas. The European Union and the international community have accused the current government of President Yanukovich of politicising the trial. The shadow of suspicion falls on the current president, primarily because of conflicts with Tymoshenko in the past. She lost the 2010 presidential election, in which she stood as Yanukovich's opponent, and subsequently accused him of falsifying the election results. It is not a simple matter to evaluate the correctness and legitimacy of the proceedings of the Ukrainian courts. In recent months, however, the case picked up such speed that even the planned European Football Championship (EURO 2012) was pulled into the debate. The Football Championship should not be associated with such a political case, and therefore I agree with Commissioner Füle, who has also stated that the event should be linked first and foremost with sport, and not with politics. I firmly believe that this case can be resolved so that it will not continue to jeopardise relations between the EU and the Ukraine.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing.* – (PL) The recent political events in Ukraine are concerning, especially for those who have a particular interest in Ukraine's European future. One of the European Parliament's key tasks is to demand compliance with the democratic standards which are a guarantee of further cooperation with the European Union. We are absolutely justified in highlighting the situation of the former prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, but it is also crucial to choose the right methods of exerting pressure on Ukraine.

I am resolutely opposed to mixing politics with sport, and this was the position I took in response to suggestions that the 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship should be taken away from Belarus. I have been greatly alarmed to hear key EU politicians calling for a political boycott of Euro 2012. The Polish delegation in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) has called on all Members of the European Parliament to participate in Euro 2012 in Poland and in Ukraine, and under the current circumstances I support this call. The effect of boycotting Euro 2012 would be the opposite of that intended. What Ukrainian society needs today, much more than a boycott of Euro 2012, is European openness and interpersonal contacts. A boycott of Euro 2012 could unintentionally cause an increase in anti-European sentiment. I therefore greatly welcome the fact that calls for a boycott of Euro 2012 have ceased, since this is political common sense.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) An event such as the European Football Championships is an opportunity for unity, peace and brotherhood, to show everyone the culture of the host countries and integration between the peoples of Europe in a festive atmosphere. This is the power of sport, to unite in diversity and this is the motto of the European Union, 'United In Diversity'. Unfortunately, the situation in Ukraine this time is likely to divide, given that human rights in that country are not fully respected; the case of former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko speaks loud. For this reason, the European Parliament has adopted a resolution calling for the end of the ill-treatment to which the former Prime Minister is subjected in prison. This resolution, coming before the European Championships, is not intended as an attempt to boycott them but as a form of pressure calling on the Ukrainian Government to respect justice and human rights.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – In favour. One of our main foreign policy objectives is to enhance and foster relations with Ukraine and strengthen the European Neighbourhood Policy, whose aim is to encourage political, economic and cultural relations between the countries concerned and the EU and its Member States; We

underline with this resolution the fact that the signing and ratification of the Association Agreement and its effective implementation will require an improvement in the human rights situation, including decriminalisation of political decisions under a reformed penal code, in the rule of law and in deep democracy, with an end to the stifling of the political opposition and with free, fair and transparent elections.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The recent revelations regarding the inhumane treatment to which the former Prime Minister of Ukraine is being subjected in prison (sentenced to seven years in prison for abuse of power and awaiting trial for embezzlement and tax evasion) make the situation unacceptable for all of us. With this vote, we want to remind Europe that Yulia Tymoshenko languishes in the Ukrainian prison system, serving an absurd and unjust sentence imposed by an antidemocratic and anachronistic regime. Ms Tymoshenko – whose health, moreover, is extremely poor – must be released immediately. For our part, the European Union must act immediately and more effectively than it has hitherto. In Ukraine, it is a fact that there is political manipulation of the judicial system and the only message that the government in Kiev can send to prove otherwise is to free Yulia Tymoshenko.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Ukraine is a country of major strategic importance for the European Union. Within the framework of its external policy and of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU is seeking to develop its political, economic and cultural relations with Ukraine. In view of this, Parliament deplores the sentencing of Yulia Tymoshenko, while emphasising that strengthening the rule of law and an independent judiciary, as well as initiating an effective fight against corruption, are key not only to the deepening of EU-Ukraine relations, but also to the consolidation of democracy in Ukraine. For these reasons, I voted for this joint resolution of the European Parliament.

Ramon Tremosa i Balcells (ALDE), *in writing*. – I celebrate the effort and results that our President Schulz got on his visit to Ukraine and welcome the positive predisposition of Ukrainian authorities to accept the proposal of EP, such as sending medical experts to assess the health condition of imprisoned Ms Yulia Tymoshenko and sending an internationally well-respected person to monitor the second trial of the former Prime Minister. The mutual trust between the European Union and Ukraine can only be based on democratic freedoms, transparency, the fight against corruption, respect for human rights, and the unconditional immediate release of all prisoners sentenced on politically motivated grounds. Ukraine has to find the way to carry out these reforms to converge with European values, norms and standards. For all these reasons I will vote in favour of this motion for a resolution.

Zbigniew Ziobro (EFD), *in writing*. – (PL) The case of Yulia Tymoshenko is polarising our relations with Ukraine. Her detention and treatment violate the accepted rules for treating prisoners, and we should demand that representatives of the European Parliament are allowed not just to visit the former prime minister, but also to participate actively in her court hearings. We must negotiate delicately in order to avoid damaging the fragile sovereignty of a country outside the EU and encroaching on its freedom to make and enforce laws. We are also resolutely opposed to attempts to boycott Euro 2012 matches as a way of exerting pressure on the authorities in Kiev.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The comments made in this resolution on Ukraine are voiced by the majority in Parliament whenever the question arises of relations between the EU and the Eastern European countries, and whenever those countries refuse

to renounce their sovereignty and fulfil the role that the major powers of the EU, US and NATO have ordained for them. The majority in Parliament are behaving as usual: promoting interference, manipulating events, inventing or exaggerating other events, and praising former or current allies. This is again the case with Yulia Tymoshenko, a woman who was on the frontline of the colour 'revolutions' in Ukraine, driven by support from the EU, the US and NATO, and who substantially increased her wealth during the period in which she governed the country. The majority in Parliament has uttered not a word about the processes of liberalisation and privatisation that led to the sudden enrichment of a handful of people and to steps backwards for the vast majority of Ukrainian society, with the complicity and in the interest of the major EU powers. It is also worth remembering that Ukraine is pivotal to the geostrategic interests of the US and the major EU powers, particularly in terms of energy and the geostrategic encirclement of Russia by NATO.

Motion for a resolution: B7-0234/2012

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I am voting for this report, in particular with regard to the results of the Fundamental Rights Agency report on homophobia, transphobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. These results demonstrate the need for the Commission to take the appropriate measures, responding to the proposal for an annual report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. As it is vital to combat discrimination on the basis of sex or gender, the EU must protect the fundamental freedoms of its people and ensure their protection, guaranteeing full respect for all citizens.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted for this resolution because we should send a clear message against homophobia. It is unacceptable that in 2012 in Europe this irrational aversion continues to express itself in different forms, such as hate speech, psychological and physical violence, persecution and murder. I also believe that we must take a clear position to fight any kind of discrimination and unjustified limitations of rights which are often hidden behind justifications based on public order, religious freedom and the right to conscientious objection. For this reason with this text we once again ask the Commission to produce a comprehensive road map for equality on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, and ask the Council to unblock the Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, which is blocked due to the objections of some Member States.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) We have adopted a resolution condemning homophobia in Europe. We have called on the Member States and third countries such as Russia and Ukraine to uphold the rights of homosexuals. Finally, we have asked the Commission to speed up its work on the draft directive on non-discrimination.

Kinga Gál, Pat the Cope Gallagher, András Gyürk and Ádám Kósa (PPE), *in writing.* – (HU) The Hungarian delegation of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) holds that there is no place in the European Union for any form of negative discrimination whatsoever, and that all such harassment is condemnable and should be combated. Neither sexual nor ethnic, national or linguistic minorities must be allowed to be persecuted. This is the essence and basis of the protection of fundamental rights.

The reason why despite all this our delegation voted against some of the articles submitted to separate vote and why it abstained from the final vote on the resolution is that the draft resolution contained factual errors and misrepresentations, as well as proposals concerning matters that currently clearly fall within Member State competence based on the principle

of subsidiarity. The legitimate fight against homophobia must be separated from misrepresentations by certain political groups.

Carlo Casini (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The continued insistence on calling for European documents against homophobia demonstrates that the true objective is different from the apparent one. The principle of equality of all human beings, their dignity and the consequent need to respect everyone's freedom regardless of their sexual orientation is an accepted fact, on which all parliamentarians agree. It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose, as indeed is clear from the resolution in question, that the objective pursued by the emphatic rejection of homophobia is to make same-sex marriage acceptable.

It is implicit in the text that there is an aspiration to educate children to consider a same-sex relationship as having the same value as marriage, as the foundation of the family and therefore of the state, as recognised by Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We must not confuse the duty to guarantee freedom for all citizens with the state's promotion of and support for what constitutes its foundation. On this point, educational and cultural aspects play a fundamental role and we must therefore oppose a misguided line of action that will result in public harm.

Emer Costello (S&D), in writing. – I very much welcome this EP resolution condemning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expressing regret that the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gender people are not yet fully upheld across Europe, including in a number of EU Member States. LGBT people are too often the target of unacceptable discrimination and sometimes violence. We need first to work on education to combat from an early age sexist prejudice and homophobic stereotypes. Cases of self-harm and suicide among young LGBT teens are warning signs of the urgent need to take action. Studies show that LGBT young people experience bullying at much higher rates than the general student population and they are less likely to seek support from teachers and adults. I welcome the EP's clear statement that the rights of LGBT people are more likely to be safeguarded if they have access to legal institutions such as cohabitation, registered partnership or marriage, and the call on all EU Member States to consider these. I would urge the Commission to now come forward with a comprehensive road map for equality without discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Marielle de Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The European Union must be at the forefront of the fight against homophobia in the world. Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people can still be seen in some EU Member States but also in our immediate neighbours, notably in the adoption of unjust laws or the increase in violence. The resolution adopted by Parliament reiterates a number of basic principles and calls on those states to respect human rights and individuals' sexual orientation. It also encourages different forms of legal recognition for homosexual couples, such as marriage, cohabitation or registered partnership, which ensure better legal protection.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I very much welcome the resolution adopted by the European Parliament, which strongly condemns all discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity and wholeheartedly regrets that the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are not yet fully upheld in the European Union. I therefore call on the Member States and the Commission to firmly condemn homophobic hate speech or incitement to hatred and violence. Through this resolution, I call on the Commission to ensure that the annual report on the application of the Charter

of Fundamental Rights includes a strategy to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights in the EU, including full and comprehensive information on the incidence of homophobia in Member States and proposed solutions and actions to overcome it.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The right to freedom and the principle of equality are concepts that underpin Western civilisation and the rule of law. This is why states governed by the rule of law guarantee in their universal declarations and constitutions that nobody can be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation. This has been an essential step forward in the fight against discrimination and homophobia. Unfortunately, however, we are aware that there are still many states that do not embrace these principles and act with veritable barbarism towards men and women merely on the grounds of their sexual orientation. That is why Parliament condemns, and will always condemn, acts of discrimination.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibits any discriminatory law or practice related to sexual orientation. However, we have seen violations of the principle of non-discrimination in countries that have signed this pact, as happened recently in St Petersburg, Russia, with the violent attack on a coach carrying lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual activists, and in Kiev, Ukraine, where two leaders of the 'Gay Pride' movement were beaten. This joint motion for a resolution was tabled pursuant to Rule 110(2) and (4) of the Rules of Procedure, replacing the motions for resolutions by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left and the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. I voted for this motion, which concerns the fight against homophobia in Europe. Homophobia, like racism or xenophobia, undermines society and is contrary to the provisions assumed by Parliament, including Directives against discrimination and in favour of gender equality. No one can be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, whether in the workplace or in any other place or Member State. This is a fundamental right and must be respected as such, both in the EU and beyond.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) We believe that, in order to achieve an effective policy of equality, it is vital to fight for, create and strengthen measures and guidelines that, among other things, combat all types of discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation. This fight is extremely important in eradicating homophobia and any hateful acts or speech or the defence thereof, and incitement to discrimination, ridicule, verbal, psychological and physical violence, all of which merit our wholehearted condemnation, along with other such acts.

Carlo Fidanza (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted against the motion for a European Parliament resolution on the fight against homophobia in Europe, as I believe that we should not confuse homophobia, which is of course unacceptable, with family law. As the interpretation of the European Court of Justice confirms, there is not, and there should not be, a single family model, but rather we acknowledge the diversity of national legal schemes, thus excluding the possibility of predominance by EU sources. The European Union, in fact, is a community made up of 27 Member States, 27 different cultures, and 27 different traditions, and we have to protect unity in diversity, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity. The European Union's task is to foster the harmonisation, rather than the uniformity, of family law.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) The European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The EU will promote and assert these values in its relations with the Member States and the rest of the world. Homophobia is an irrational fear of and aversion to people of a different sexual orientation based on prejudice, similar to racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and sexism. This attitude manifests itself in the private and public spheres and takes various forms, such as hate speech and incitement to discrimination, ridicule, and verbal, psychological and physical violence, as well as persecution and murder, discrimination in violation of the principle of equality, and unjustified and unreasonable limitations of rights. The European Commission has made a commitment to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the EU, and its representatives have stated that homophobia should have no place in Europe. It continues to manifest itself, however, whether overtly or covertly, in Member States and third countries. I find it regrettable that, even in the European Union, the fundamental rights of people with a different sexual orientation are still not fully respected. Any discrimination, hate speech or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity is shameful.

Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (PPE), *in writing.* – (HU) The Hungarian delegation of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) holds that there is no place in the European Union for any form of negative discrimination whatsoever, and that all such harassment is condemnable and should be combated. Neither sexual nor ethnic, national or linguistic minorities must be allowed to be persecuted. This is the essence and basis of the protection of fundamental rights.

The reason why despite all this our delegation voted against some of the points submitted to a separate vote and why it abstained from the final vote on the resolution is that the motion for a resolution contained factual errors and misrepresentations, as well as proposals concerning matters that currently clearly fall within Member State competence based on the principle of subsidiarity. The legitimate fight against homophobia must be separated from misrepresentations by certain political groups.

Catherine Grèze (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – (FR) I co-signed and voted for this resolution on the fight against homophobia in Europe as it was essential for us to send out a strong message against the homophobic laws that have been recently adopted, or are in the process of being adopted in certain countries, particularly at the very heart of Europe, where homosexuality is criminalised. The European Parliament, as a great defender of fundamental rights, had a duty to examine and condemn these extremely worrying laws that demonstrate the increasing homophobia that can be seen today in Europe. It is utterly scandalous that the authorities should justify these laws by saying that they are necessary to protect public morality, while they restrict freedom of expression and are totally discriminatory on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. How is it possible to consider demonstrations, support for, or the mere acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people as 'homosexual propaganda'? For the first time since the last European elections, all of the main political groups have come to an agreement: we are saying 'no to homophobic laws' and we clearly condemn any discrimination, hate speech or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Ágnes Hankiss (PPE), *in writing.* – (HU) I find it sad that the noble and welcome goal of the fight against prejudice based on ethnic, religious or sexual identity is regularly degraded

by the political left wing to a tool of vehement and often violent and intolerant political campaigns.

My abstention from the final vote does not mean that I do not agree fully that homophobia is intolerant behaviour that violates the dignity of our fellow human beings. However, I find it unacceptable that this resolution is replete with misrepresentations and falsehoods, and seeks to intervene unscrupulously in legislation that falls strictly within Member State competence. I find it outrageous, for example, that the original text attempts to blame the shameful statements of a Hungarian far-right party on the governing party.

I believe that the former resolution, drafted on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) by Mr Weber and Mr Busuttil, represents an exemplary document speaking out in support of the protection of human dignity and against all forms of prejudice, while remaining tolerant and balanced and free from any misrepresentations and exaggerations that belong to the domain of political marketing. I sincerely regret that the former resolution will ultimately not be submitted for a vote; I myself would be proud of it even if, knowing the mathematics of Parliament, the left-wing majority would clearly vote it down.

Philippe Juvin (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) The European Parliament adopted this joint resolution by 430 votes for, with 105 against and 59 abstentions. Whilst the European Union is founded on the values of non-discrimination, respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, freedom of expression, equality and the rule of law, we must, unfortunately recognise that, increasingly, there is homophobia, hate speech and incitement to violence and discrimination in certain Member States. The European Parliament has sought, via this resolution, to remind people that it strongly condemns any violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and the increasing trend towards homophobia. Whilst the initial objective of this resolution is wholly praiseworthy, I am afraid that its authors have not focused on the issues of homophobia alone and have attempted to widen the resolution to the question of the right to marry. This issue should not appear in a resolution whose initial objective was exclusively to condemn homophobia. Furthermore, this is an issue that falls within the jurisdiction of the Member States. Finally, this resolution has been transformed into a catalogue of irrelevant good intentions. Faced with this lack of rigour and coherence, I opted to abstain in the final vote on this resolution.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for this resolution which regrets the fact that homophobia continues to manifest itself in Member States and third countries, including murders, banned Gay Prides and equality marches, public use of inflammatory, threatening and hateful language, police failure to provide adequate protection, violent authorised demonstrations by homophobic groups, and the explicit prohibition of recognising existing same-sex unions.

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the joint motion for a resolution on the fight against homophobia, the text of which condemns any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Within the European Union, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people must be protected against hate speech and homophobic violence. Partners of the same sex must enjoy the same protection as the rest of society.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The resolution we have voted on is the most appropriate way to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia. I am satisfied with the agreement reached by the groups, which enabled the various motions initially

tabled to be combined into a single motion. There is, unfortunately, in many countries a level of ignorance that feeds homophobic feelings. The European Union has reached a mature position on this sensitive issue. It has always promoted the fight against all forms of violence, marginalisation and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Today's vote relaunches the European strategy with an invitation to the Commission to review the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia, to include violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and to complete the anti-discrimination package with the introduction of a clear prohibition of discrimination on the same grounds. I disagreed with the reference to the directive on freedom of movement, as it goes beyond the fight against homophobia, once again returning to the age-old question of recognising the effects of civil unions. The Committee on Petitions has been called upon several times to deal with this matter. As the European Commission has always reiterated, this does not fall within the competence of the Union.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I abstained from the vote on this resolution, as I do not agree with many of its points. At a time when Europe is experiencing major economic difficulties, I do not believe that it is appropriate to address this divisive issue.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (ES) I voted in favour of this resolution because it emphatically condemns any discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. It also highlights the fact that in the EU there are occasions when the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are not always fully upheld, and it therefore calls on Member States to ensure that those people are protected from homophobic hate speech and violence, and to ensure that same-sex couples enjoy the same respect, dignity and protection as the rest of society. It continues by urging Member States and the Commission to firmly condemn homophobic hate speech or incitement to hatred and violence, and to ensure that freedom of demonstration – as guaranteed by all human rights treaties – is respected in practice.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The right to be different is a founding expression of human rights. Sexual difference between consenting adults, love between two men or two women or between a man and a woman definitely belongs to the private life to which every human being has a sacred right. The countries of Europe, whether or not they belong to the European Union, must ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are protected against hate speech and homophobic violence and guarantee to partners of the same sex the same respect enjoyed by the rest of society. I condemn any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and deeply regret that the fundamental rights of LGBT people are not always fully recognised in the European Union. The Member States of the European Union should be exemplary in the application and protection of fundamental rights in Europe. I am also deeply troubled by certain laws or decisions that are being used to arrest or fine heterosexual citizens who express support for or tolerance or acceptance of LGBT people and by the fact that these laws legitimise homophobia and, sometimes, violence.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – It is totally abnormal when people are pursued or made fun of because of their religion, nationality, ethnicity, sex, social affiliation, etc. I totally support the report in the part which relates to violation of human rights and limitation of freedoms. However, I think that LGBT people should not impose their affiliation on other people in order not to provoke any anger or hatred from other people. I am against one-sex marriages because it is against the Christian tradition of marriage.

Gay Mitchell (PPE), *in writing.* – The reason I abstained on paragraphs 3, 9 and Recital L is that certain sections of this Resolution are extraneous to the issue of homophobia. For example, issues of marriage and the recognition of civil status documents are a matter of subsidiarity for Member States only. It does great disservice to the fight against homophobia to be trying to make political capital by introducing issues for which Parliament has no competence when we should be using all our energies to oppose homophobia. I am dismayed that those who say they are concerned with issues of justice do not give attention to areas of grave injustice about which we could do something, such as gendercide when 100 million females are missing from the world's population, mostly in countries that receive EU funding.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) One of the principles enshrined in the Austrian constitution is that all people should be treated equally unless grounds exist that justify treating them unequally. In principle, each of us can live as we see fit. However, it is also necessary to ensure that no group is given preferential treatment. In view of all the lobbying we are currently witnessing for LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) persons, one might get the impression that this is a favoured social grouping. While the free expression of sexuality is an important right, there are certain circumstances that need to be taken into consideration. Single sex partnerships cannot produce progeny. Children are the result of a relationship between male and female. Accordingly, giving homosexuals adoption rights is completely unnatural and certainly detrimental to the child. Instead we should be thinking of ways to strengthen the family, particularly in the light of the demographic situation in Europe. I wish, however, also to make it clear that I deplore violent attacks and similar incidents against peaceful LGBT demonstrators. As I am opposed to the call for marriage rights for homosexuals for the reasons I have mentioned I have voted against this motion.

Tiziano Motti (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I am one of the 59 MEPs who abstained in the resolution against homophobia. Allow me to clarify: abstention does not mean that I disagree on the principle of non-discrimination or am indifferent in condemning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We very much regret that still, within and beyond the EU borders, as is happening in Ukraine, the fundamental rights of LGBT people are not always fully respected, often with developments that restrict freedom of expression and assembly based on misconceptions about homosexuality. In some EU Member States and non-EU countries, such as Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Russia, Ukraine and Moldova, laws of this kind have already been used to arrest and fine citizens, including heterosexual citizens who express support, tolerance or acceptance towards homosexuals. My abstention does not therefore go against the defence of people's dignity but shows my rejection of an attempt to use the umpteenth 'Parliamentary Trojan horse' to sneak through content that in fact requires a thorough debate in the appropriate forums – which a non-legislative resolution such as the one passed today certainly cannot provide – but habitually parasitises this type of text for purely opportunistic reasons.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) On 22 April, Ihsane Jarfi, a young man of 32 years of age, was beaten to death in a car by four individuals as he left a bar frequented by homosexuals in the city of Liège. Ihsane Jarfi is the victim of the first homophobic murder in Belgium, an ominous signal in a society where violence and intolerance are becoming common. This shows the importance of today's vote adopted by such a large majority.

Clearly, we must condemn this intolerable yet dramatically resurgent form of discrimination that is homophobia. We should remember that homosexuality is, above all, a right to live

like ‘everyone else’, that it is not merely a sexual preference but rather an integral part of sexual identity. We should remind certain religious dignitaries that the priority is to protect the right of each person to be what they are and not to send homosexuality back to the shadows. We need to re-design education systems to include education in the respect, tolerance and awareness of other people. It is essential to introduce courses on ‘common values, rights and duties’ into the curriculum, from the earliest years, so that the fight against homophobia will, in the future, be successful.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The current situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people is particularly worrying. I am deeply disturbed by the rise of homophobia not only in non-member countries, but also in Member States of the European Union, and more especially by the violent acts against homosexuals that have taken place in Russia and in Ukraine. The European Parliament had a duty to respond: it is important that Europe should set an example of the full recognition of and complete respect for the rights of LGBT people and condemn the promulgation of legislation likely to restrict their freedom of expression and assembly, thus infringing the fundamental human rights established by the Council of Europe and the European Union. Our duty is also to protect these people against any form of hate speech and all forms of discrimination. I therefore voted in favour of this resolution on the fight against homophobia in Europe.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – In favour. We strongly condemn any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and strongly regrets that, in the European Union, the fundamental rights of LGBT people are not yet always fully upheld. We call, therefore, on Member States to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are protected from homophobic hate speech and violence, and ensure that same-sex partners enjoy the same respect, dignity and protection as the rest of society. We urge Member States and the Commission to firmly condemn homophobic hate speech or incitement to hatred and violence, and to ensure that freedom of demonstration – as guaranteed by all human rights treaties – is respected in practice.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), in writing. – (IT) My vote was totally opposed to this resolution because I believe it is absolutely not a European matter to deal with the right of same-sex couples to marry, since this matter, according to the subsidiarity principle, shall be left to the legislation of the Member States. The constitution of my country clearly defines what marriage is and does not provide for any alternatives. Europe cannot interfere in this matter, let alone set out the following, in paragraph 9 of the resolution: ‘considers that LGBT people’s fundamental rights are more likely to be safeguarded if they have access to legal institutions such as cohabitation, registered partnership or marriage; welcomes the fact that 16 Member States currently offer these options, and calls on other Member States to consider doing so’. My opposition is also based on the merits of the case, because while I understand the need to combat discrimination, including sex discrimination, this has nothing to do with the surreptitious indications that this resolution gives that same-sex couples can marry. For this reason, I am opposed to this resolution.

Michèle Striffler (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the joint motion for a resolution on the fight against homophobia, which I co-signed in the name of my political group. Recent developments in certain European countries, relating to restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly that are based upon an erroneous conception of homosexuality, are particularly worrying, and homophobia continues to show itself in various guises, even within the European Union. I deeply regret that the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are still not always fully respected.

The European Parliament must strongly condemn any discrimination or incitement to hatred or violence on the basis of sexual orientation. Finally, it is my view that homosexual children should have access to positive and reassuring information about their sexuality. For these reasons, I supported the adoption of the joint proposal for a resolution in its entirety.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Respect for human dignity is one of the fundamental pillars of society. Homophobia should therefore be eliminated, as the right to difference and freedom of sexual orientation should be incontestable. I therefore condemn any and all kinds of discrimination and violence on the basis of another's personal choices. I believe that it is extremely important that these concepts be enshrined in legislation and in institutions, in particular, through education and raising awareness. No one should be humiliated, mistreated or discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Ramon Tremosa i Balcells (ALDE), *in writing.* – I signed and support this resolution because it is intolerable that today in Europe we still experience violations of freedom of expression, discrimination, racism and violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Homophobia is the irrational fear of, and aversion to, male and female homosexuality and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people based on prejudice, and it is similar to racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and sexism. The European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and must respect and uphold and promote these values. I therefore clearly welcome this resolution to stress these principles once more.

Niki Tzavela (EFD), *in writing.* – (EL) I consider it unacceptable in this day and age that discrimination based on sexual orientation still exists. Homophobia must be combated throughout Europe first and in the rest of the world after that. It is a fact that every country in Europe has its own culture and its own rate of adjustment and development and we cannot therefore impose exactly the same laws on every country arbitrarily. Nonetheless, we need a basic European legislative framework that guarantees equality and condemns any form of discrimination and homophobia. Europe needs to set an example to the rest of the world, especially to countries where homosexuals often face even the death penalty.

Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR), *in writing.* – I have been very encouraged by the generally very tolerant attitude that people in the United Kingdom and other countries now have towards homosexuality and am strongly supportive of the opportunity that homosexual couples now have for legally recognised same sex partnerships. However, I share the concern of many that the institution of marriage, which is the firm foundation on which society is built, has been undermined, and I believe that 'gay marriage' is a step too far. In any case I do not believe that the European Union should seek to intervene in the internal social affairs of member countries.

I therefore abstained in the final vote on this resolution.

Frank Vanhecke (EFD), *in writing.* – (NL) It is odd that this resolution does not contain a single word regarding the problem of violence against homosexuals that is seen today in many European countries. This violence is usually the work of young Muslims and it is apparently not politically correct to flag this up and condemn it? That in itself is one reason to abstain from voting on this resolution, but there are others, too. Again, we are going too far here in disregarding the subsidiarity principle. In my opinion, it is best if the people and Member States *themselves* decide whether or not they want to introduce marriage

between people of the same sex and whether or not they want to recognise such marriages contracted in other Member States. After all, this is not a question of discrimination or the lack thereof. So, stop for God's sake. Stop this European interference and confusion over terminology.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing.* – I support this resolution against homophobia in Europe. This resolution calls for equality and non-discrimination measures for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, as everyone deserves equal protection under the law. This includes protection from hate speech and violence, discrimination in schools, free movement in the European Union, and indeed we believe same-sex couples are better protected under the law if they have access to legal recognition. In too many countries LGBT people still face discrimination and persecution, which range from ill-treatment and violence to imprisonment, torture, and murder. We believe the resolution voted today will proudly affirm the European Parliament's commitment to equality and human rights for all.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing.* – The European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and must uphold and promote these values in its relations with the wider world. I supported with my vote the joint motion for a resolution, believing that its adoption will contribute to the freedom of expression of homosexuality and transgenderism.

Glenis Willmott (S&D), *in writing.* – I am delighted to have voted in favour of this joint resolution, which reaffirms the European Parliament's commitment to fighting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, in the wake of worrying developments both within the European Union, in Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary, and in neighbouring states. Non-discrimination, equality and protection of fundamental rights are core European values, and the European Union must therefore take the lead in standing up for LGBT people where they are suffering from hate, violence or discrimination. I regret that the ECR group, which is dominated by the UK's Conservatives, refused to sign this joint resolution, along with UKIP and its EFD group. Conservative MEPs also overwhelmingly failed to support paragraph 9 on equal marriage. I am concerned that, where other Members of the European Parliament have demonstrated a strong cross-party consensus on this issue, the Conservatives have shown that they do not understand the importance of the fight against homophobia and all forms of discrimination.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) The fight for equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is a struggle of the utmost importance. The events mentioned in the report merit the fiercest criticism and are part of an extremely worrying situation that calls for reflection and action. We are fighting for another Europe, of workers and peoples; of sovereign nations, equal in rights and duties, where homophobia has no place whatsoever.

Report: Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (A7-0161/2012)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I am voting for this proposal, as I believe that the only path towards growth and employment in Europe must be based on a resource-efficient Europe, as this will increase its competitiveness and result in new sources of growth and jobs in various sectors of activity, at a time when these are not being sufficiently exploited within the EU. Moreover, it will result in greater cost savings due to

more efficient management of resources, commercialisation and innovative processes over their life cycle. We should follow this path in order to support a Europe that is increasingly efficient and competitive at global level.

Roberta Angelilli (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The transition to the green economy, as well as being a move towards a low carbon economy with a consequently lower environmental impact, is a ray of hope for our enterprises, first and foremost for those which have invested huge sums in restructuring their production to become environmentally friendly and for those that have focused on innovative technologies and production of environmentally friendly products. It also leads to a reduction in the social costs caused by increasing unemployment rates, especially among young people, as it creates new jobs and at the same time is an incentive to achieve the strategic objectives contained in the Europe 2020 strategy. A recent study by WWF Italy has estimated that funding of EUR 1 billion for sustainable infrastructure and environmental programmes could create 29 000 jobs in agriculture. More targeted investment of the same amount in the renewable energy sector would create 52 700 jobs, or 25 900 in the energy-saving sectors, especially in the construction industry.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), in writing. – (FR) This report concerns the reduction in the waste of resources to strengthen our economy and to protect our environment. As a member of the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, responsible for this text, I undertake on a daily basis to strike the best possible balance between achieving the European Union's environmental objectives on the one hand, and increasing the competitiveness of our companies on the other. As this text meets these objectives fairly well, I voted in favour of it. It argues for environmental taxation and demands an end to environmentally harmful subsidies by 2020. Being non-binding and focused on progressive change, it meets our companies' need for realism. In fact, I believe that we need, not a green revolution, but a progressive development of our economy and our society towards practices that provide increased protection for our environment and, therefore, for our health.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The accelerated degradation of the environment, the destruction of natural capital and the loss of biodiversity that we are condemning today are the result of the over-exploitation of natural resources. Faced with the urgency of the situation, the European Union must react and agree on an increased effort to use resources more efficiently, taking into account the limits of our planet. It seems vital to manage existing resources in Europe more strategically and in a more environmentally-friendly manner. At stake are our own well-being and the interest of future generations, to whom we must pass on the opportunity to enjoy the same advantages that we have had. Therefore, it is crucial to put greater emphasis on information, education and awareness-raising, especially regarding the sorting of waste, reuse and recycling. This encourages more sustainable forms of consumption and has a direct impact on resource-efficient habits. This report, which contains ambitious, practical measures that encourage a rational use of resources, seems to me to be going in the right direction. However, as it cannot solely be a strategy at the level of Europe as a whole, it must henceforth win support at national, regional and local levels.

Sergio Berlato (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The global economy is slowly, and unevenly, coming out of the worst crisis and recession it has ever known. While we are dealing with immediate problems such as high unemployment, inflationary pressures or fiscal deficits, it is also a priority to look to the future and devise new ways of ensuring growth in Europe.

The challenges are clear: our planet is growing towards 9 billion people in 2050; the number of middle-class consumers will almost double to more than 3 billion people in the coming 10 years; food production will increase by 70% by 2050.

The Road map for a Resource Efficient Europe, in my view, while providing an analysis and outlining the first steps towards a new agenda for growth, does not, however, reflect the necessary sense of urgency. The Commission sets the right direction for building the future of Europe, but is not sufficiently concrete in the steps that should be taken. It is strategically important to define the priorities of a new growth agenda and to push the Commission, Member States and industry towards a more ambitious agenda, one not limited to a merely European dimension but to be embraced at national, regional and local levels as well.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) Natural resources are essential for the functioning of European and world economy and for the quality of our life as well. These resources, including raw materials such as fuels, minerals and metals, but also food, soil, water, air, biomass and ecosystems are under increasing pressure. In the context of these changes, a more efficient use of resources will be essential for ensuring growth and employment in Europe. This increased efficiency will create important economic opportunities, will lead to improved productivity and lower costs and will boost competitiveness. A more efficient use of resources will allow us to fulfil many of the EU's objectives and will be crucial if we are to make progress in combating climate change and in fulfilling our objective of cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by 80 to 95% by 2050.

Jan Březina (PPE), *in writing.* – (CS) The 'Road map to a Resource Efficient Europe' provides an analysis and sets out the first steps towards this new agenda. It does not, however, reflect the necessary urgency. The European Commission indicates the right direction, but is not sufficiently specific in terms of the steps that should be taken. In my opinion, the main challenges are to strengthen cooperation between the public and private sectors, to improve the European use of secondary materials and to create the right incentives for avoiding the production of excessive waste and for contributing to the reuse of waste, and to make resource efficiency and sustainability a top priority in innovation programs both at European and at national level. This is not just a European agenda. The new agenda for future growth should also be embraced at national, regional and local levels. Eurobarometer research shows the willingness of European citizens to play an active role in this agenda. This is possible by consuming more sustainably, by minimising waste, and by improving the collection and sorting of waste. The more efficient use of resources does not have to be a top down exercise, but can be promoted on both sides. Local politicians play a crucial role with regards to citizen participation.

Alain Cadec (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted against the Gerbrandy report on a resource-efficient Europe. I have no particular problem with the general structure of the report, which forms part of the 'Europe 2020' strategy. However, I am against the idea that supposed 'overcapacity' in the European fishing fleet should be deemed a key component of the reform of the common fisheries policy. I would like to point out that, in the absence of data on the European fleet's capacity, it is impossible to complain of overcapacity in that self-same fleet.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this proposal as I believe that it is up to Parliament to push the Commission, the Member States and industry towards

a more ambitious agenda that is not limited to simply following the established road map, but rather first defines its priorities and sets out the criteria for a new agenda for future growth. I also believe that the EU should play a leading role at international level, by pushing for this new agenda for future growth at the Rio+20 summit. The EU should use its political and economic strength to pull other parts of the world in the same direction, towards a green economy. In order to ensure our own well-being and that of future generations, we need to start operating within our planet's boundaries, and to decouple our economic growth from our resource use.

Corina Crețu (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the resolution because coordinated measures are required to counter the global gloomy outlook. Our planet is growing towards 9 billion people in 2050, the number of middle-class consumers will almost double to more than 3 billion people in the coming ten years, according to the FAO food production must increase by 70% by 2050, and already now 60% of the world's ecosystems are degraded or used unsustainably. Europe needs a new agenda for future growth. This new agenda will demand a paradigm shift and a new way of thinking towards our production and consumption patterns. It will require not only technical, but also institutional changes and social innovation.

George Sabin Cutaș (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the report on a resource-efficient Europe. Considering the current economic crisis and the alarming increase in food and energy prices, we must endow the European Union with a viable strategy in the field. By investing in green technologies, the European Union not only can create jobs, but also enhance competitiveness and reduce energy dependency. As rapporteur for my political group concerning this dossier within the Committee on International Trade, I have pleaded for reducing and, ultimately, eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers against trade of ecological goods and services.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I am delighted that this report has been adopted. The initiative, entitled 'A resource efficient Europe' is one of the seven flagship initiatives in the Europe 2020 strategy, which aims to promote intelligent, sustainable, inclusive growth.

In addition, this flagship initiative intends to introduce a policy framework to support the transition towards a resource-efficient, low carbon economy, which will help to: boost economic performances whilst enabling the use of fewer resources; search for and create new opportunities for economic growth; intensify innovation and boost the Union's competitiveness; ensure secure supplies of essential resources; combat climate change and restrict the environmental impact of resource use.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Energy efficiency is one of the flagship objectives of the EU, and its main aspects were detailed in the Commission's Road map for a Resource-Efficient Europe. Moreover, this issue is one of the pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and employment. I therefore support all measures that can put Europe on the path to optimising its energy resources. Moreover, this area of the economy can contribute to real expansion, creating jobs and improving the well-being of the European public. However, I believe that it is vital to take full advantage of current legislative procedures in this area before forging ahead with new measures that might overlap with and perhaps even negate the effect of existing measures.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Although the population of some European countries is declining, the reality is that the global population continues to grow.

Moreover, gregarious societies continue to decrease, while the number of people with greater resources is increasing, and figures show that the amount of middle-class consumers will double by 2050. This phenomenon is expected to cause a 150% increase in demand for raw materials. In view of this scenario, it is clear that an innovative approach is needed that can simultaneously promote European competitiveness and economic growth, reduce environmental impact, and implement a green economy in which natural resources are managed sustainably. To that end, it is vital that there be close cooperation between the public and private sectors, and better links with academic centres of excellence working on food and energy-efficiency projects. I voted for this report on a resource-efficient Europe because we urgently need to pursue the creation of a green economy, without delay. The EU cannot lose its leadership role in this area, but should rather use this opportunity to create new jobs – green jobs – and increase its exports.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) We agree that there is an urgent need to increase resource efficiency. The report contains some recommendations and observations that are certainly positive. Unfortunately, however, this report, like others, is typical of a markedly commercial approach to environmental problems. The stated goal of the report is positive, but we are concerned about the paths that have been chosen in order to achieve it. We also completely disagree with some of the positions adopted throughout the report, such as the creation of a ‘strong common agenda’ between the public and private sector, which is aimed at nothing more than opening the door to processes for liberalising the waste market, with the privatisation of waste collection and management. We also reject several of the tax proposals, under the terms in which they are presented in this report. The report insists on a system in which citizens are accountable, on a number of very different levels, for both the ‘internalisation of external environmental costs in accordance with the ‘polluter pays’ principle’, and in terms of accountability for choosing products that are more sustainable, thereby reducing waste and its impact. This obscures that fact that what is really needed is to change the current models of production and consumption and the economic system underpinning them, namely capitalism: it is intrinsically unsustainable and preys on the environment and its resources.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), in writing. – (SK) It is expected that the number of people on our planet will rise to 9 billion in 2050, and that over the next decade, the number of middle-class consumers will almost double to more than 3 billion people. According to the FAO, food production will have to increase by 70% by 2050, and even today, 60% of the world’s ecosystems are degraded or not used in a sustainable manner. Europe needs a new agenda for future growth that would guarantee Europe a high level of prosperity and quality of life. Parliament’s role is to set priorities and to urge the Commission, Member States and industry to adopt the ambitious agenda. The agenda for future growth means that it we cannot proceed as we have done until now. This agenda will have to be adopted at the internal, regional and local level. From the international perspective, it is the only way forward. The EU should play a leading role and promote this new agenda for future growth at the Rio+20 summit. I consider a transition to a green economy to be essential. In order to ensure our own well-being and give future generations the opportunity to enjoy the same benefits as we do, it is important to start work within the limits of our planet and to decouple economic growth from resource use.

Adam Gierek (S&D), in writing. – (PL) We do not have enough resources in the European Union to meet internal consumer demand. What this means is that on the one hand we need to establish a different and more economical model of consumption, and on the other

we need to find the right approach to new economic instruments. What we should do is to remove the environmental tax on labour and transfer this burden to resources, energy and materials. This will be a step in the right direction in terms of more efficient use of resources.

We need further changes to tax systems and cooperation within the EU's single market in order to ensure that Europe becomes more competitive at global level. Investments in the EU, which are essential for development, should take this into account. I therefore voted in favour of Parliament's own-initiative report, in the hope of a future legislative solution which takes into account Europe's innovation-friendly market philosophy.

Mathieu Grosch (PPE), in writing. – (DE) It seems that almost all political parties support the idea that we should not just handle resources with care, but must promote renewable energies in particular. Implementation in the various Member States seems far removed from this 'aspiration', however. The various majorities in Europe's governments are all struggling with the same challenge: promoting growth, protecting the environment and avoiding weakening one's own country with the measures implemented; environmental dumping will be the new challenge and will pose an even greater difficulty at global level than at European level. That is reason enough why these topics need clear decisions in Europe, rather than just declarations of intent.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of this report as our economy and our industry in Europe depend on resources and raw materials, the prices of which are increasingly unstable and access to which is a growing challenge, in a context of fierce international competition.

In order to protect our industrial competitiveness, and also our environment, we must learn to reduce our dependence on these resources, by developing innovation and recycling. I am thinking especially of the rare earths needed for quite a few new technologies, where China holds almost all of the mining potential.

We should also look towards the sustainable exploitation of resources whose potential is still, too often, underestimated. The European Union must encourage its businesses to produce more innovative, more sustainable products. It must also influence consumer behaviour and make consumers more responsible. This is why I support current experiments on the environmental labelling of products, the aim of which is to provide Europeans with credible information on the environmental impact of their consumer choices.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of this report which stresses the need for the European Union to manage the use of natural resources in a more strategic manner. Faced with the need to find new sources of sustainable economic growth that ensure our energy independence and put an end to social inequalities in access to resources, this report puts forward sound, practical proposals. It especially suggests strengthening the existing action plans to invest in green research and innovation, which are sources of growth and employment, and removing all obstacles to a functioning European market in recycling. The European Union must also set an example in environmental requirements, by extending eco-design to non-energy products and environmental information to mass consumer goods, and by a more systematic use of green public procurement.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), in writing. – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution on a resource-efficient Europe but today while dealing with immediate problems such as high unemployment, inflationary pressures or fiscal deficits, we have to look to the future and

devise new ways of using available resources efficiently. I agree that we must radically improve the European use of secondary materials and create the right incentives for avoiding and reusing waste. We must make resource efficiency and sustainability a top priority in innovation programs both at European and at national level. We must change the way we measure our wealth and economic growth by taking into account environmental sustainability, natural capital and resource efficiency. We must set new product criteria for all products entering the European market by extending the scope of the Ecodesign directive with recycled content, durability and reusability. Only by consuming in a more sustainable manner, reducing waste and improving the collection and selection of waste can we contribute to our own well-being and that of our planet. A more efficient use of resources is an integral part of the green economy. The EU should use its political and economic strength to turn other parts of the world in the same direction. In order to ensure our own well-being and give future generations the possibility to enjoy the same benefits as we do, we must use resources within our planet's boundaries.

Peter Jahr (PPE), *in writing.* – (DE) The efficient handling of our raw materials is an important step in sustaining competitiveness in Europe. The EU's lack of resources in many areas needs to be countered with innovative and effective strategies. The greatest challenge is to increase economic output and at the same time to use fewer resources. It is also important that we should not impair the performance of European business through over-ambitious targets, nor do we wish to tell every individual what to do. Our primary aim should be to propose specific measures that provide incentives for making all aspects of life more resource-efficient.

Philippe Juvin (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I am pleased that this report has been adopted with a large majority. The world's population will have increased by 30% by 2050 to 9 billion people. Faced with this estimate, we have to conclude that the way that we currently use resources is untenable. To ensure a more rational and reasonable use of resources, the European Commission insists in its communication on the need to minimise the production of waste, to develop new products and services, to improve stock management, to change consumption patterns and, finally, to optimise production processes and commercial methods, with a view to stimulating technological innovation and promoting employment in the 'green technologies' sector. More broadly, the Commission aims to guarantee the transition to a low carbon, resource-efficient economy. The Gerbrandy report welcomes the Commission's approach and calls for coordinated action, for greater awareness amongst consumers and, finally for a European energy efficiency plan up to 2020.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) Last autumn, the European Commission adopted an action plan for a resource-efficient Europe, in which it outlined policy directions and initiatives aimed at guaranteeing sustainable and environmentally friendly economic growth for the EU. Ensuring biodiversity and healthy ecosystems for the citizens of our continent is a huge challenge which already requires concrete and coordinated action under many policies, such as scientific research, production and consumption, transport and construction. It goes without saying that it is also essential to use resources more effectively, by managing natural resources properly and recycling secondary materials effectively. I also agree with the rapporteur that close cooperation with public and private sectors is key to the creation of an appropriate strategy, and action at local level is as important in this regard as efforts at European level.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR), *in writing.* – (PL) I have reservations about Parliament's call on the Commission to make proposals by 2014 with a view to introducing a general

ban on waste landfill at European level. I am also not in favour of calling on the Member States to introduce an environmental tax. I support the efficient use of secondary materials and the establishment of appropriate measures to encourage waste avoidance. Nevertheless, in some Member States, such as Poland, it will be the average taxpayer that will be hit hardest by bans, environmental taxes and other coercive measures. I do not believe that this has been given due consideration in the Gerbrandy report.

Sergej Kozlík (ALDE), in writing. – (SK) The number of people on Earth will rise to 9 billion by 2050. The number of middle class customers will almost double to more than 3 billion people. According to the FAO, food production will have to increase by 70% by 2050, while even today, 60% of the world's ecosystems are degraded or not used in a sustainable manner. Parliament's role is to set priorities and to press the Commission, Member States and industry to adopt an ambitious agenda for the use of resources. The transition towards an economy that makes use of waste, a significant improvement in the use of secondary raw materials and the creation of incentives for waste reduction, the inclusion of resource efficiency as a priority of innovation programmes, and the introduction of environmental sustainability criteria must become a strong common agenda for the EU with the aim of attracting the other areas of the world in this direction. I have therefore supported the material and the resolution.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), in writing. – (IT) I voted in favour of the Gerbrandy report, despite some reservations on certain points in the text that I feel do not take local differences and peculiarities into account, especially in more peripheral areas. The tight deadlines requested for a landfill ban on the one hand respond to renewed calls to respect the guidelines of the Europe 2020 strategy; on the other hand, however, they fail to take into account the evolution of waste disposal processes in some European regions, such as Sicily, which could not in any way meet the new requirements and would thus incur heavy fines.

Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE), in writing. – (PL) The report on a resource-efficient Europe emphasises many worthwhile tasks currently faced by the European Union. It discusses the European strategy for future economic growth and its international dimension, and it highlights the issues of biodiversity, natural capital and ecosystem services. Both the European and the global economy are currently suffering the effects of the economic crisis, but I believe that we should look to the future and develop new programmes, and take advantage of innovative measures which will guarantee economic growth and progress. Europe needs ambitious plans which make allowances for the rapidly changing situation and which emphasise cooperation with Member States, regional authorities and local governments. For these and other reasons I voted in favour of the Gerbrandy report.

David Martin (S&D), in writing. – The challenges are clear: our planet is growing towards 9 billion people in 2050, the amount of middle-class consumers will almost double to more than 3 billion people in the coming ten years, according to the FAO food production must increase by 70% by 2050, and already now 60% of the world's ecosystems are degraded or used unsustainably. What Europe needs is a new agenda for future growth. This new agenda will demand a paradigm shift, a new way of thinking towards our production and consumption patterns. It will require not only technical but also institutional changes and social innovation. The new agenda for future growth will guarantee Europe a high level of prosperity and quality of life. The Road map for a Resource Efficient Europe gives the analysis and sets out the first steps towards this new agenda

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted in favour of the Gerbrandy report on a resource-efficient Europe. To preserve our natural capital and to invest sustainably for future generations, it is important for us to become more resource-efficient, in other words to reduce the use of resources. The European Commission and the Member States also have to develop recycling and reuse. Advances related to the functioning of the single market ought to support these initiatives. Similarly, we need to improve protection for the forests in the European Union and consolidate the measures to prevent risks, such as forest fires.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I fully agree with the call to establish joint task forces for the three key areas of food and drink, housing, and mobility in order to develop, as soon as possible, European Resource Efficiency Action Plans with clear resource reduction actions. My vote was in favour.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Europe is facing both challenges and great opportunities in relation to the use of its resources. As demand for raw materials surges globally, the EU has the chance to reap the rewards by strengthening raw materials supply and efficiency, while satisfying the needs of EU industry and the raw materials sector. This is why the Commission's 2008 move to take the lead in efficient resource-use policy was of the utmost importance. However, it is still vital that the Commission and the Member States move towards its quick implementation. I believe that resource policy and resource diplomacy are very important for the EU, not only with regard to industrial policy and international trade, but also as a cross-cutting issue concerning various areas of internal policy, as well as external and security policy. The Commission should therefore pay attention to both this issue and the energy issue. I see this as a task for the European External Action Service.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) The economic crisis that the European Union is currently experiencing shows the need to change our growth model. Increasingly, our industries are faced with increasing prices for raw materials. A transition to a resource-efficient economy is becoming inevitable and necessary. To improve the use of their resources, the Member States must remove all obstacles to the functioning of the European market in waste recycling and reuse. The promotion of research and technological innovation in areas such as waste collection and sorting could indeed be a way of maximising our resources. Progressive removal of some ineffective subsidies and their substitution with smart environmental taxation will allow us to stimulate the EU's competitiveness. The resource efficiency agenda must mainly be applied to three key areas, namely food and drink, housing and mobility. Parliament's aim, however, is to integrate the concept of resource efficiency in all of the Union's other policies.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – Moving towards a resource-efficient economy will bring increased competitiveness and new sources of growth and jobs, through cost savings from improved efficiency, commercialisation of innovations and better management of resources throughout their lifecycle. I voted in favour.

Alajos Mészáros (PPE), *in writing.* – (HU) Our planet's population could rise to up to 9 billion by 2050, meaning that food production will need to be increased by 70%, while 60% of the world's ecosystems are already damaged.

Europe, too, will need to prepare for the changes that will follow; therefore, we need a new agenda for future growth. We must change not only our way of thinking as regards our consumption patterns, but also our wasteful use of resources in production.

Resource efficiency and sustainability must become top priorities in our innovation programmes both at European and national level. A common agenda needs to be established for the public and private sectors, as the transition to a circular economy must be a social challenge in which we are all involved.

The use of secondary resources must be increased radically in the European Union, while waste generation must be mitigated. This, however, will require not only technical, but also institutional changes. The new agenda for future growth could provide Europe with a high level of prosperity and quality of life. Therefore I, too, voted in favour of the first step towards the transition to a more resource-efficient economy.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) It is a fact that the world's population is growing, while natural resources are becoming increasingly scarce. In order to combat this, we need a new approach in all areas in order to ensure that people can still be provided with food. We also need to bring an end to the pillage of raw materials. Sustainability and resource efficiency are the keywords with which the EU aims to take the lead worldwide. I have abstained from voting because I am not in total agreement with the rapporteur and believe that fine tuning is required right now. If not, we may find ourselves faced with a problem involving unforeseen scenarios that we are unable to respond to.

Siiri Oviir (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ET) In the midst of the continuing economic crisis, Europe and the whole world are at a crossroads where they must decide what path to take in order to ensure that our human and natural environment is sustainable. It is clear that after the economic recession there will be another period of rapid growth, and our economy is already showing signs of revival, which means that Europe needs a new action plan for future economic growth. Achieving resource efficiency by developing different environmental technologies must serve as the motor of the new economic growth, not senseless consumption. The transition to a green economy is unavoidable, and I am glad that several European Union Member States, led by Germany, have understood this, seeing it as an opportunity to develop and invigorate the economy, not as an additional cost. I supported the report for the reasons given above, and I hope that Europe's green economy can serve as an example to the whole world.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) In line with the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, the report on resource efficiency is seen as one of the pillars of the European future. Parliament is committed to pursuing the goal of enhancing the use of raw materials and energy and to promoting a low environmental impact economy through targeted investments and innovative technologies, so as to create an economy that is less intensive and more effective by 2050. Recycling, research and innovation, public and private investment and a competitive market are the basis on which this project is built and for which, as we listen to the needs of our citizens, all of us need to strive on a daily basis.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing*. – (EL) The unprecedented economic crisis in Europe is, apart from anything else, a warning alarm in terms of the future use and application of its resources. The world population is expected to reach 9 billion and, according to the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), food production needs to increase by 70 % by 2050, at a time when 60 % of global ecosystems are being degraded and overexploited. Clearly Europe, and with it Greece, obviously need a new agenda and policy for their future development model. In order for that to happen, we need both technical and political and institutional changes in the Member States. In this report, which I voted in favour of, the European Parliament considers that we have a duty to emphasise

the need for the Member States to take initiatives, by setting specific priorities in this direction.

Alojz Peterle (PPE), in writing. – (SL) I voted in favour of this report because it very specifically defines the way to achieve efficient management of natural resources, in accordance with the targets of Europe 2020. I am pleased that it provides for a very inclusive and planned approach, that it requires the elimination of barriers in the internal recycling market and the abandonment of environmentally harmful subsidies.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) By adopting today the Gerbrandy report on improving the use of natural resources, the European Parliament has sent out a clear message: the increasing scarcity of resources is a reality, but it is not inevitable.

We can explain this phenomenon: the intensive use of resources in the agricultural policy, the fisheries policy and the industrial policy, speculation on the commodities markets and the marked growth in world consumption. One figure sums up this situation really well: the real price of basic products has increased by 147% since the start of the century.

This is why the war on waste must be one of the Union's objectives in the coming years, especially in the three key areas of food and drink, housing and mobility. Having been the rapporteur in 2005 on the legislation relating to the green design of electrical consumer goods, I know full well that upstream action in the production chain is the best way to protect our resources.

Another key to success: innovation. How can we justify, for example, that 1% of the world's energy use is accounted for by leaving technological products on standby? Let us encourage and create conditions so that industrial players take a greater, more effective role in the protection of resources.

Crescenzo Rivellini (PPE), in writing. – (IT) Today, we adopted Mr Gerbrandy's report in plenary here in Strasbourg. Parliament and the Commission have laid ambitious plans to tackle resource use. The Member States must now take up the challenge and strive for efficiency. Parliament's resolution calls for the gradual elimination of landfill and calls on the Commission to submit proposals to that end by the end of 2014. It should also revise the 2020 recycling targets, which were set in the Waste Framework Directive, and ensure that incineration of recyclable and compostable waste is phased out by the end of this decade.

European industry and consumers have everything to gain from environmentally friendly products. We therefore call on the Commission to propose an update to the Ecodesign Directive to include non-energy-related products and to demand greater durability, recyclability and reparability of goods. Labelling should also provide consumers with instructions on the use of resources and their environmental impact. To improve resource use, the resolution calls on the Commission to establish task forces to develop European resource efficiency action plans in the areas of food and drink, housing and mobility.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – In favour. The challenges are clear: our planet is growing towards 9 billion people in 2050, the amount of middle-class consumers will almost double to more than 3 billion people the coming ten years, according to the FAO food production must increase by 70% by 2050, and already now 60% of the world's ecosystems are degraded or used unsustainably. What Europe needs is a new agenda for future growth. This new agenda will demand a paradigm shift, a new way of thinking towards our production and consumption patterns. It will require not only technical, but

also institutional changes and social innovation. The new agenda for future growth will guarantee Europe a high level of prosperity and quality of life. The Road map for a Resource Efficient Europe gives the analysis and sets the first steps towards this new agenda. But it does not reflect the necessary sense of urgency. We simply cannot afford to take ten, twenty years for the transformation towards a circular economy. The highly competitive world we live in and the spectacular rise of emerging economies do not give us this much time. The European Commission sets the right direction, but is not sufficiently concrete in the steps that should be taken.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted for this programme because new production and consumption patterns need to be planned in advance, in terms of their technical, institutional and social implications. Since Europe's population is expected to double by 2050, economic growth has to be separated from resource use from now on. People must be encouraged to play an active role by consuming sustainably, by minimising waste and by collecting and selecting waste.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) In view of the effects of the economic crisis and the fact that public opinion is highly sensitive to environmental issues, I believe we need to swiftly implement whatever measures are needed to achieve the objectives of making more efficient use of all resources (especially raw materials and energy), favouring the transition to a low carbon economy, encouraging the use of environmentally friendly products (by promoting the use of recycled materials and broadening the scope of ecodesign standards), and fostering investment in innovative technologies (both for producing goods and services and for cutting polluting emissions). I think in the medium term (by 2020) we should lay the foundations for shifting from our current, resource-intensive economy to a technologically more advanced one that has a smaller environmental footprint and is characterised by greater energy and employment security (achieved through the creation of 'high value-added' jobs). This transition, which should be completed by 2050, should be accompanied by a system of tax incentives and disincentives aimed at shifting the tax burden from work to resource/raw-material use, hopefully to the benefit of employment. That is why I voted in favour of the report.

Alf Svensson (PPE), *in writing.* – (SV) In today's vote in the European Parliament on the report by Mr Gerbrandy about a resource-efficient Europe, I voted in favour. However, in this explanation of vote I want to make it clear that I am not giving my unconditional support to the report. A few of the paragraphs in the original text, such as paragraphs 20, 32 and 55, contain ideas which can be regarded as both reactionary and naïve, particularly from an economic perspective. The subject is an important one and, to a large extent, I share Mr Gerbrandy's view of the solutions, in particular with regard to the problem of EU subsidies for businesses in the fishing and agricultural industries that cause damage to the environment, the importance of innovations for promoting resource efficiency in Europe and the EU's responsibility in the global arena. Therefore, I chose to vote in favour of the report, despite the wording of the paragraphs referred to above, which I regard as unfortunate,

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The Commission has published two proposals on resource efficiency, namely the Road map to a Resource Efficient Europe and A resource efficient Europe – Flagship initiative under the Europe 2020 strategy. In view of the increased global population and the changes to the consumption of goods in newly developed countries, I consider it necessary to establish an economic-growth agenda aimed at using existing resources efficiently. I am voting for this report, which seeks to achieve a

resource-efficient Europe, and it is imperative that greater coordination be applied at local, regional and national level. Greater sharing of best practices in relation to the management of the Structural Funds should be encouraged within the networks of local and regional authorities. Finally, I believe that improving people's quality of life and ensuring intergenerational solidarity are vital, so that young people can have a richer and more prosperous future in terms of employment opportunities.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the report on a resource-efficient Europe. I believe that, in order to create a resource-efficient Europe, it is necessary to encourage innovation and research, and at the same time reduce resource use, so as to avoid resource scarcity and rising resource prices. We invite the Commission to streamline the waste *acquis* and we call on the Commission to make proposals by 2014 for a gradual phasing-out, by the end of this decade, of incineration of recyclable waste. In addition, we call on the Commission to revise the 2020 recycling targets of the Waste Framework Directive. I believe a fair opening-up of global markets to environmental goods and services encourages sustainable consumption, creates export opportunities and new jobs based on the use of new technologies. I call for measures to ensure that the most efficient use of resources is a key consideration within regional policy. I believe resource efficiency should be addressed at regional and local level, taking into account the potential and different development levels of European regions. We urge the Commission to calculate and disclose the costs of environmental damage arising as a consequence of the EU's agriculture and fisheries policies.

Marita Ulvskog (S&D), *in writing.* – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats would like to emphasise that, in principle, we take a positive view of a shift to environmental taxation, but we believe there will be problems if the focus is on excessive cuts in income tax. A move to green taxation should not reduce the revenue from taxes and, therefore, affect the redistribution of wealth. Environmental taxes should pave the way for technical innovations and help to create green jobs and fair working conditions.

The report also deals with the need to protect the EU's forestry industry. Given the differences in forestry throughout Europe, we would like to highlight the importance of allowing the Member States to manage their forestry industries themselves.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing.* – (LT) I agree with the rapporteur that we need to establish a resource-efficient Europe. This is important for the EU's economic and ecological security. Efficient use of resources in Lithuania is low. Although the intensity of energy use in Lithuania is in decline it remains very high. According to a report recently published by the European Environment Agency, which is based on OECD statistics, energy efficiency and the effective use of resources is almost 25% lower than the EU average. Smarter, limited use of resources is not only a strategic necessity for Lithuania, but is also an economic opportunity. By using resources more efficiently, establishing clearer long-term policies and generally investing in ecological innovations, we would strengthen the basis for growth and job creation for our citizens and would achieve our climate and energy goals. Compared to other EU Member States, Lithuania is lagging behind in terms of the generation of waste that is more resource-friendly – the generation of municipal waste is about 400 kg per person in Lithuania, 18% higher than the EU average. By consuming in a more sustainable manner, reducing the amount of waste and improving waste collection, resources can be used more efficiently. A Eurobarometer poll carried out earlier this year demonstrated that the majority of Lithuanians would like to play a more active role in using resources efficiently. The time has come for political leaders to do the same.

Iva Zanicchi (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Public and private sector involvement in drawing up resource efficiency action plans, removal of barriers to the operation of the European recycling and reuse market, development of clear, measurable economic indicators, expansion of the scope of the ecodesign directive and, above all, greater promotion of research and technological innovation are the key actions needed to make the Union more resource efficient. That is why I voted in favour, although I would like EU legislation to be fully implemented before new initiatives are adopted.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) Although the stated objective of this report is positive, it approaches environmental problems in a market-oriented way. We disagree with the creation of a 'strong common agenda' between the public and private sectors, as this is aimed at nothing more than opening the door to processes for liberalising the waste market, with the privatisation of waste collection and management. The overriding idea is that citizens are to be made accountable for their choice of products. What is really needed is to change the current modes of production and consumption inherent to the capitalist system, which exploits the environment and its resources for the benefit of the few.

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Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I am voting for this report, as I believe that it is vital to develop strategies and economic and labour-market policies to create more and better jobs for more young people, in order to combat precariousness. I would stress some important proposals for combating unemployment: a strategy set out at EU level, analysing the past of each Member State's labour market, education and training policies; the creation of a Youth Guarantee securing the right of every young person to be offered a job, an apprenticeship or additional training and combined work after a maximum period of four months' unemployment; national campaigns to combat early school leaving; improved links between education systems and the labour market, adjusting supply to the demand of more young people; and a European system for the recognition of formal and informal learning. History has already demonstrated to us Europeans that austerity measures merely exacerbate our economic and social situation. The EU should now concern itself with economic growth and employment; otherwise, we will be doomed to fail, and to lose a generation of qualified young people.

Roberta Angelilli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The youth unemployment figures are alarming: one in five young people under the age of 25 is looking for a job and cannot find one, and a good 7.5 million young people aged between 15 and 24 are not in employment, education or training. These are the so-called NEETs. In view of that, eight action teams were set up last January for the eight countries with the highest levels of youth unemployment, and one of them was for Italy. What have they achieved so far? I ask because the objectives and measures contained in the new Youth Opportunities Initiative are promising and ambitious, and I would not like them to remain just on paper without providing an effective response to this worrying situation.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) The youth unemployment rate reached 22.1% in 2011 and I think that we need a real action plan. I approved the motion for a resolution proposing solid, practical measures to promote job creation and projects for young people. We have proposed a reallocation of structural funds and even the introduction of a 'Youth Guarantee' to ensure that young people are not unemployed for more than four months. We must focus on youth, our children, our future. As a specialist in structural funds, it

saddens me that 82 billion remain unused and therefore need to be mobilised before the end of next year. If they go unused, these funds will be lost to the regions that have been unable to use them. We have therefore invited the European Commission to reallocate these funds as a priority to SMEs and to projects aimed at young people.

Liam Aylward (ALDE), in writing. – (GA) In 2011, the unemployment rate for young people in the EU was 22%, with a rate higher than 40% in two Member States. That means that 5.5 million young people are unemployed in the EU.

The level of unemployment amongst the young in Ireland is three times higher today than in 2008 and we do not know the full extent of the problem due to the high rate of emigration. We are talking about skilled, ambitious young people, who could boost the economy's competitive potential and growth, and who also have the skills needed to achieve the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

In every part of the Union budget cuts are impacting on jobs and skills programmes for young people, and for that reason I welcome what the Commission is doing to ensure the availability of jobs, training or places on further education courses for young people within the first four months of leaving school.

I agree with the request in the motion that those Member States who already have a guarantee in place for young people would cooperate with other countries, like Ireland, in which there is significant unemployment amongst the young.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The watchword is: save the lost generation. With an average unemployment rate of 23.5% in the EU, young people are amongst those most seriously affected by the consequences of the economic and social crisis. In the resolution adopted today, we call on the European Commission to show itself to be innovative when drafting measures to promote youth employment. The Youth Guarantee that it proposed in its latest communication is a good start, as is the willingness to use uncommitted structural funds. We now wait to see these good intentions, which ought to concern all of the Member States, put into practice. The Youth Guarantee should contribute to ensuring that, several months after having left school, young people can take up a traineeship, an internship or an apprenticeship. However, to make this aim more than just talk, we need to make it legally binding. Finally, a not insignificant part of the EUR 82 billion of Structural Funds that remain uncommitted must go directly to supporting projects aimed at young people and also to SMEs, which are the main force in job creation. The distress is real; the need for action is urgent; we have no choice, otherwise we shall soon risk being accused of failing to provide assistance.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) At the moment, one in five young people on the labour market cannot find a job. The youth unemployment rate (over 20%) is twice the rate for the overall active population and almost three times higher than the rate for the adult active population. Under these circumstances, young people who encounter difficulties in finding a job may decide to extend or resume their studies. This is an investment in the future, provided that they obtain the adequate qualifications. Nonetheless, the fact is that many young people take part in neither the job market, nor the education system. In order to successfully face such challenges, Europe must invest in its youth population and put forward immediate and effective actions to prevent and combat the high levels of youth unemployment. I believe it is necessary to implement measures aimed at stimulating economic growth in order to create new jobs, but such measures alone are not enough to tackle the issue of youth unemployment.

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the resolution, because I believe in the necessity for such an initiative, which promotes youth access to the labour market. The fact that the youth unemployment rate within the EU is over 22%, in the context of a growing labour shortage, is a matter of concern. Therefore, I welcome Mr Barroso's initiative to send 'Action teams' to Member States recording the highest youth unemployment rates and I am eagerly waiting to see their proposals on improving youth access to the labour market. Another important issue to be taken into account is that of apprenticeship status. We need minimum standards at European level supporting the provision and take-up of high-quality internships. In most cases, young people are obliged to accept internships as an alternative to a job paid in accordance with their academic studies.

Marielle de Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Unemployment amongst Europe's young people exploded between 2008 and 2011, rising from 14.7% to 22.8% in three years. In Spain, 50% of young people are affected. For years, the European Parliament has been issuing proposals to put a stop to this scourge that is sapping the morale of our young people. The report suggests, in particular, the introduction of a major investment plan aimed at creating more jobs in the Member States and the release of part of the unused structural funds (EUR 82 billion over the last four years) to stimulate projects that benefit young Europeans. The risk of seeing a 'lost generation' is increasingly serious in the EU and it must be fought vigorously by all Member States.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I welcome the adoption of this resolution which calls on the Member States to introduce national schemes for young people and urges them to take swift practical measures at national level, to ensure that young people are either in a decent job, education or re-training within four months of leaving school.

I believe that it is important to introduce strategies, economic and labour market policies urgently to create more and better jobs for the young, thereby avoiding the precariousness trap of young people having a succession of temporary jobs and unpaid internships not leading to any real improvement in salary and working conditions or to more stable forms of employment.

Tamás Deutsch (PPE), *in writing.* – (HU) As a consequence of the prolonged European economic crisis, the rate of unemployment among European youths increased from 14.7% in 2008 to 22.1% in 2011. 5.5 million people under the age of 25 are unemployed. The aim of the plenary debate is to call upon the European Commission to adopt measures related to the future and employment opportunities of European youth, as well as to draw attention to the severity of the situation.

In early 2012, the European Commission sent action teams to eight Member States where youth unemployment was significantly higher than the EU average. The action teams were tasked with drawing up action plans to promote youth employment. The French rapporteur calls on the European Commission to report on the progress it has made so far with the help of these action teams, and also addresses a question to the competent Commissioner about what additional means and resources the Commission intends to bring to bear to promote job creation and especially to combat youth unemployment. I supported the rapporteur and the draft resolution which seeks to find a solution to one of Europe's most crucial problems.

Diane Dodds (NI), *in writing.* – The rise in youth unemployment is one of the biggest social challenges that we face across the European Union. In my own constituency of

Northern Ireland, approximately one in five young people are currently out of work. In a recent study it is estimated that growing youth unemployment costs Northern Ireland around GBP 250 million a year in lost productivity. This equates to a cost of close to GBP 5 million per week to the local economy and is still increasing. Although the major contributing factor to the huge percentage of youth unemployment is the current economic crisis across the EU, there are also various other contributing factors that must be examined. Studies show that around 3% of young people still leave Northern Ireland schools with no formal qualifications and many more do not achieve the necessary qualifications in numeracy and literacy. Failure to attain even basic qualifications leads to significant difficulties in gaining employment and can lead to social problems and disengagement from mainstream society. Therefore it is vital that Member States put in place employment initiatives to boost employment opportunities and give our youth the chance to have a meaningful stake in society.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Youth unemployment is one of the most terrible aspects of the current crisis. It is crucial, therefore, to invest in the education and training of young people in Europe to improve their skills and so combat unemployment and encourage entrepreneurship. That is why I welcome the Youth Opportunities Initiative, particularly its special programmes for supporting and encouraging job creation for younger people, and the European Youth Guarantee, which will allocate EUR 4 million to Member States to help them set up Youth Guarantee schemes. If Europe wishes to achieve the ambitious objectives of the EU 2020 strategy, which has a strong focus on innovation, research and training, it will have to invest in improving the skills of its young people, by opting for education models that are more closely orientated towards their future entry into the labour market.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) This motion for a resolution, tabled following the question for oral answer on the Youth Opportunities Initiative, addresses the need to increase the European Union employment rate, particularly the youth employment rate. Many thousands of businesses have gone bankrupt as a result of the economic and financial crisis, millions of people have lost their jobs and unemployment rates have soared to levels never before seen: the EU average rate is over 10%, with youth unemployment more than 22%. These rates vary between Member States, rising to nearly 50% in the countries most affected by the crisis, such as Greece and Spain. I voted in favour of this report because I believe that the EU has to act quickly. About 25 million young people are looking for work and we must harness their potential, including through programmes that enable them to create their own jobs so they are not forced to leave their homelands. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly with regard to access to bank credit and reduced bureaucracy, because it may well be that SMEs will make the greatest contribution to solving this problem.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) Youth unemployment in the European Union has reached shocking levels. It averages about 22.4%, though in some countries, such as Portugal, it is much higher. This resolution, which has some positive aspects that we appreciate, comes after the President of the Commission sent letters to the eight Member States, including Portugal, with youth unemployment rates significantly higher than the EU average and 'Action teams' were sent to these Member States to prepare youth employment plans. This hypocrisy is also shocking. Youth unemployment in the EU was not inevitable. It is a political decision. It is a decision taken by those, such as Mr Barroso,

who impose policies that sow the seeds of unemployment and poverty. Jobs will not be created without a decisive break from the so-called austerity policies that have been backed by the majority of this Parliament.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) After a lacklustre economic recovery since 2010, unemployment is again on the rise, reaching an average of 10%, which the youth unemployment rate in the EU is above 22%. There are relatively large differences in the youth employment situation in the various Member States. In some countries, it is well below 10%, and in the countries that have been hardest hit by the economic crisis, youth unemployment stands at nearly 50%. The debt crisis in Europe has had serious effects in particular on those young people who have not completed their compulsory education or higher secondary school education, and also on those living in economically weaker regions. I firmly believe that the fight against youth unemployment requires greater investment in education and training throughout the EU. In my opinion, mobility and the possibility of working in another Member State may be an important step for young people in gaining better access to the labour market. In this regard, I applaud the Erasmus for All initiative, for example, and consider it proper and necessary to place reasonable emphasis on work experience abroad for students and young people in vocational training in the programme, and in the interest of their subsequently gaining suitable employment.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) Whilst the EU unemployment rate is 10% on average, the rate for young people rose to 22.1% at the start of 2011, compared with 14.7% in 2008, and is approaching 50% in some Member States. I share the observations of this proposal. It is deplorable that, after four years of crisis, EUR 82 billion of structural funds for the period 2007-2011 should remain unused. The Commission ought to redeploy a substantial part of this sum to projects for the young. We would like to achieve a real European Investment Plan that introduces a Youth Guarantee, by creating new jobs, searching for new sources of funding and providing access to high-quality internships. It is also important to coordinate the action of the Member States, whether this be related to training and market needs in the medium and long terms or to sharing best practices, in assessing the impact of the policies pursued, as in Austria, which has successfully introduced a number of guarantees for the young.

Anna Ibrisagic (PPE), *in writing.* – (SV) Today, the European Parliament has voted on the resolution about the Youth Opportunities Initiative. Levels of youth unemployment are high in many parts of Europe. We would like to make it clear that it is the Member States which have the funds, tools and responsibility for shaping labour market policy and for finding solutions to the challenges facing Europe. Initiatives on youth unemployment are, and will remain, a national issue.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour because there is absolutely no question that the economic recession has increased general and youth unemployment, both in Lithuania and throughout the EU. Approximately 5.5 million young people in the EU are unemployed. Many young people are not exploiting their learning potential or are failing to acquire the skills required by employers. Currently 7.5 million 15-24-year-olds are not in education, employment or training. The level of youth unemployment in Lithuania is one of the highest in the EU. In Lithuania one in three young people are unemployed. Only in Spain and Greece is youth unemployment higher than in Lithuania. The level of youth unemployment in Lithuania is 10% higher than the average in EU Member States. In order to really change the situation, we need to improve the conditions for creating jobs, create an attractive business environment, fundamentally change the tax

system and encourage initiatives, rather than offering one benefit and then immediately thinking up ten barriers impeding the use of that benefit. Youth unemployment, which is generally recognised as being a particularly serious problem with long-term consequences for a society that is basically raising an unemployed generation, will not be addressed effectively unless together we improve the social environment, establish a favourable mortgage system, and reduce bureaucracy and all other kinds of barriers to people who want to start their own business. In my opinion, an economic growth pact is needed much more at the moment and would be more effective. Austerity measures on their own are not enough to solve the problems today. Investment in economic growth, job creation and, above all, our future – young people – are just as important.

Philippe Juvin (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) This resolution was adopted by a very large majority in the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. Its main objectives are to intensify the fight against youth unemployment, to design a ‘European Investment Plan’ to allow the creation of new jobs and to reallocate the Structural Funds to benefit projects for young people. I supported this resolution in plenary.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR), *in writing.* – (PL) In common with the rest of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, I voted against this resolution. I do not agree with the statement that ‘the Youth Guarantee needs to be legally enforceable in order to effectively improve the situation of young people neither in employment nor in education or training’. We must look for solutions to overcome the problem of youth unemployment in the EU, but I do not believe that imposing penalties on the Member States is a good idea.

Krišjānis Kariņš (PPE), *in writing.* – (LV) I supported the motion for a resolution on the Youth Opportunities Initiative, since I consider this initiative to be a good start to reducing youth unemployment in the EU, where youth unemployment currently averages 22%. In Latvia, in 2011, 29.9% of young people were unemployed. The initiative adopted by the Commission calls on Member States to take measures to prevent early school leaving, to help young people develop skills demanded in the labour market, to ensure they obtain work experience and practical training, and to help young people find a decent first job. I believe that every Member State should draw up its own Youth Guarantee scheme that would ensure that every young person obtained either work or practical experience, or began a course of study within four months of leaving school. However, I sincerely doubt whether the EUR 4 million that the Commission is willing to allocate to Member States will be sufficient for such schemes to be put in place.

Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) Statistics show that there are around 7.5 million people aged between 15 and 24 in the European Union who are neither employed nor in the education system. Youth employment is as high as 50% in some European countries. The economic crisis is undoubtedly one of the reasons for these statistics. The problem is clear to see, and I therefore believe that we must take rapid and effective measures identifying new instruments and opportunities for young people, in particular nowadays, in such a mobile and rapidly changing society.

Concrete structural reforms aimed at job creation should be implemented. We should make use of innovation, European funds and cross-border programmes, and improve education systems. One of the most important instruments is the European Social Fund, which will allow new programmes to be created for young people and enable them to enter the labour market. For these and other reasons I voted in favour of the ‘Youth Opportunities Initiative’.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted for this report which welcomes the Commission's initiative to promote the Youth Guarantee initiative and to allocate EUR 4 million to Member States to help them set up Youth Guarantee schemes, which should be supported by active labour market policies helping to close the gap between education and training systems and the labour market, but has sincere doubts that this sum is ambitious enough to help countries facing high rates of unemployment coupled with national budget constraints put in place these types of guarantees.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The Member States are being urged to adopt a more coordinated strategy between national education and training plans and labour market needs. I agree with the proposal to adopt a European youth employment strategy supporting companies, welfare organisations, public authorities and other employers in creating decent and quality jobs.

Anthea McIntyre (ECR), *in writing.* – I fully agree with the objective of tackling youth unemployment and believe the EU has a role in assisting Member States, but the best way of tackling this problem is not by micro-managing Member States. The EU must add value to the work already being done by Member States, not duplicate it. For example, the UK has already put in place a series of initiatives, in the new Youth Contract with a commitment of almost GBP 1 billion over the next three years. The EU should promote best practice, ensure the proper functioning and completion of the single market, and above all remove barriers to growth – the red tape which prevents businesses from taking on young people. We agree with much contained within this resolution. However, we have concerns with other aspects including: attempts to pre-empt the final outcome of negotiations on the maternity leave directive; calls to define minimum standards at European level in the area of employment and social affairs; calls for more ambitious sources of additional financing at European level; and calls for the EU Youth Guarantee Scheme to be legally enforceable. Taking these concerns into account my UK Conservative colleagues and I voted against this resolution.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted in favour, convinced that the alarming rise in youth unemployment is a threat to the economic and social future of many young people in the European Union and forces them to pay a very high price for the crisis. I believe that there needs to be more investment in education and training in the EU to fight youth unemployment and that priority should be given to a more coordinated strategy between national educational and training plans and the requirements of the labour market.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (ES) I voted in favour of this report because it welcomes the Commission Communication entitled 'Youth Opportunities Initiative', building on earlier Commission initiatives such as 'Youth on the Move', 'New Skills for New Jobs' and the many initiatives presented in this series of Communications, but it has serious doubts as to whether the scale of the actions proposed is proportionate to the gravity of the current youth unemployment crises experienced in many Member States. This report welcomes the Commission's initiative to promote Youth Guarantee and to allocate EUR 4 million to Member States to help them set up Youth Guarantee schemes, which should be supported by active labour market policies helping to close the gap between education and training systems and the labour market, but it doubts that this sum is ambitious enough.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) The European Union has almost 5.5 million young people without work. Amongst the under-25s, more than one person in every five

is unable to find a job. The youth unemployment rate has reached 21%, and the situation gets no better. This is why practical actions must be carried out to resolve this issue of youth unemployment. The Member States must act on the issue of school drop-out rates and encourage the young to develop the skills that our businesses require. It is becoming a matter of urgency that we make the employment market more accessible to the young so that they can get their first job quickly. Investing in a Youth Guarantee is one way of achieving this. However, we must, above all, make smart, wise use of the funds already committed. Indeed, out of a total of EUR 347 billion for the period 2007-2013, EUR 82 billion of European structural funds had not been allocated by January this year. It is essential to use these funds to train the young, so that the European Union is, for them, synonymous with prospects for the future and with hope.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE), *in writing.* – (SK) The average youth unemployment in the European Union of around 20% is double the overall average unemployment rate in the EU. I do not consider 23 million unemployed of the economically active population, of which young people account for 5.5 million, to be an unfortunate statistic, but an appalling reality with not only far-reaching socio-economic implications for the EU, but also psychological consequences for a whole generation of young people. European society needs a high level of employment to maintain the viability of its economy, its competitiveness and, above all, its social security system, which represents a significant proportion of the national budgets of Member States, and whose costs are rising substantially in connection with the aging population. The issue of high youth unemployment looks like a journey into the abyss, and, in my opinion, it must therefore be addressed urgently. For the reasons mentioned, I support the Youth Opportunities Initiative.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – The European Parliament welcomes the Commission's 'Youth Opportunities Initiative' Communication building on earlier Commission initiatives like 'Youth on the Move' and 'New skills and new jobs' and the many initiatives presented in this series of communications, but has serious doubts as to whether the scale of the actions proposed is proportionate to the gravity of the current youth unemployment crises experienced in many Member States. I voted in favour.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) Young people are an important part of society. Their education and training should be a central concern for every Member State; after all, the youth are the future of every country. The crisis is just one of the reasons why youth unemployment has increased rapidly, a situation that cannot be sustained in the long term. Young people must be given the opportunity to establish themselves in their chosen career. The basic prerequisite for this is good education and training. In order to ensure this, we must significantly reduce the numbers dropping out from school and vocational training. We should continue to focus our attention on work experience schemes in which young people not only learn new skills, but also receive appropriate payment for their work. In addition, young people who are classified as long-term unemployed suffer from social exclusion, making it significantly harder to get them back to work. Nor should it be forgotten that the social systems operated in European countries will only work as long as the intergenerational contract can be fulfilled. I voted in favour of this resolution because it is our duty to enable young people to get a start in their working lives with no ifs or buts. In addition, I believe it is absolutely essential that we should ensure a high level of education and training in the EU, in order to make young people competitive and to maintain this competitiveness into the future.

Tiziano Motti (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted for this resolution, and I am delighted that Mario Monti, the Italian Prime Minister, has this very day promised EUR 8 billion to help young people find work. That is a good sign that European and national policies are in tune with each other. At the beginning of 2011 the average unemployment rate in the European Union was 10%, though it was 22.1% among young people, compared with 14.7% in 2008. In the resolution that has been adopted, we support the Youth Opportunities Initiative put forward by the Commission, but we have major doubts as to whether the scope of the actions proposed is in proportion to the seriousness of the current job crisis facing young people in many Member States. What is needed, therefore, is to launch a European investment plan to create jobs for young people. President Barroso has announced that EUR 82 billion of the Structural Fund budget is still to be allocated. We appeal to him, therefore, to consider our young people a top priority.

Alojz Peterle (PPE), *in writing.* – (SL) I voted in favour of this resolution because I think that, at a time of crisis, we need to pay attention to the younger generation who are facing great employment difficulties.

Crescenzo Rivellini (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) In the resolution that has been adopted, we supported the Youth Opportunities Initiative put forward by the Commission, but we expressed major doubts as to whether the scope of the actions proposed was in proportion to the seriousness of the current job crisis facing young people in many Member States. What we propose, therefore, is to launch a European investment plan to create jobs for young people. During the European Council meeting on 30 January 2012, European Commission President Barroso announced that EUR 82 billion of the Structural Fund budget, out of a total of EUR 347 billion for the period 2007-2013, is still to be allocated and could be redeployed. We therefore call on the Commission to use a substantial part of this money for youth employment schemes and to consider the possibility of increasing the percentage of EU support for projects cofinanced with the national governments of those countries with the highest youth unemployment rates: Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Youth unemployment in Europe is a real challenge that we have to face. In some countries affected by the crisis, almost every second young person is unable to find work. These same young people are often also suffering discrimination in the labour market due to their precarious situation. Furthermore, the current economic situation and the period of austerity it has caused offer little hope to the young. The European Parliament has therefore decided to act in favour of youth employment. To this end, we invite the Commission to redeploy a part of the unused Structural Funds to support projects aimed at promoting education, training, mobility and access to employment for the young. We also urge the Member States and the Commission to improve links between the worlds of education and work by better adjusting educational curricula to the needs of the labour market and by offering quality internships offering high-value education and training. I support these proposals and have therefore voted in favour of this resolution.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – In favour. I also want to stress that the employment situation of young people is highly dependent on the overall economic situation. I welcome the Commission Communication entitled 'Towards a job-rich recovery' and urge Heads of State or Government in the EU to present as soon as possible a European Investment Plan boosting inclusive, sustainable and job-rich growth. Finally, I also stress that the Youth Guarantee needs to be legally enforceable in order to effectively improve

the situation of young people neither in employment nor in education or training and to gradually overcome the problem of youth unemployment in the EU.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The exponential rise in youth unemployment in Europe, which is currently above 22%, is stifling the future prospects of an entire generation. A revival of youth employment that is both sustainable and good quality needs to be put in place without delay, as the best guarantee against the problems of precariousness and chronic unemployment. Such measures should be part of a wide-ranging support strategy for local communities, businesses, public authorities and social security organisations.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *in writing.* – (PL) I voted in favour of the resolution on the 'Youth Opportunities Initiative'. There are three issues I regard as particularly important: the situation of young mothers, the link between training and labour market requirements and support under the European Social Fund.

The greatest gap in employment between women and men affects those aged between 25 and 35. Employers do not want to employ young women as they are afraid that they will fall pregnant and become a burden, since they will be less available and the employer will have to pay additional contributions. It is therefore absolutely vital for the state to implement a policy which makes it easier for women to balance work and family life in order to ensure that potential employers are not afraid to employ young women, and to ensure that they do not hit a 'glass ceiling'. The Member States should offer training which allows professionally active women to work at home. Access to child care in nurseries and pre-schools is also essential.

According to the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy, the Member States must ensure that professional training is better adapted to labour market requirements. Young people must be trained for the future, or in other words with a view to labour market demands.

I would call on the Commission and the Member States to make the best possible use of the Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund (ESF), in order to implement concrete programmes aimed at reducing unemployment among women. EUR 82 billion is available under the ESF until 2013, and the priority should be to increase youth employment levels.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) It is a goal of the European Union to help young people get into the labour market and to enhance the status of interns and apprentices. To achieve this, we need to work urgently on strategies and economic and labour market policies to create more and better jobs for the young, thereby avoiding the precariousness trap of young people having a succession of temporary jobs and unpaid internships not leading to any real improvement in salary or working conditions or to more stable forms of employment. At the same time, we should back up national labour market, education and training policies with a Youth Guarantee securing the right of every young person in the EU to be offered a job, an apprenticeship, additional training or combined work and training after a maximum period of four months' unemployment.

Monika Smolková (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) I would like to thank my colleague, Ms Pervenche Berès, for her excellent motion for a resolution, which I supported, and I am very happy that we have started to take concrete steps to address youth unemployment. We have effectively bailed out the banks, which bear substantial responsibility for the current situation, but we are unable to lay down basic rules for youth employment that

will finally start contributing to employment. The resolution provides many proposals for addressing youth employment, but I do not think that mobility and the opportunity to work in another Member State will improve access to the labour market, since it will create a problem in both countries. I welcome the Commission's approach of not obstructing the transfer of EU funds that may be unspent for various reasons unused, allowing the Member States to contribute to young people finding jobs on the labour market. However, I think the most important tasks are to structure education in national programmes in relation to economic needs and to increase the responsibility of companies and businesses in preparing young people for work.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE), in writing. – (PL) I voted in favour of the resolution because I believe that it allows the European Parliament to make an important contribution to the debate on ways to fight youth unemployment. National reform plans should make high-quality youth policy a priority, in accordance with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. In common with previous speakers, therefore, I would like to call on the Member States to concentrate on developing effective and long-term strategies to coordinate education systems with current labour market demands.

The 'Youth Opportunities Initiative' is a positive example of an EU measure aimed at reducing the number of early school leavers and promoting vocational training. Yet the EU must be more ambitious with its measures. In order to support more initiatives under the new 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework, greater financial support should be allocated to the fight against youth unemployment. It would be a good idea for the European Commission to reallocate funds that have not been disbursed under the 2007-2013 Financial Perspective to youth programmes and support for professional mobility.

Alf Svensson (PPE), in writing. – (SV) Today, the European Parliament has voted on the resolution by Ms Berès from the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament about the Youth Opportunities Initiative. This resolution is an initial reaction to the Commission's employment package, which was presented a few weeks ago. Youth unemployment is a very grave problem in Europe. Despite problematic issues, to say the least, with a legal right for every young person to be offered a job, an increase in the regulation of internships and the creation of a European system for certifying and recognising formal and informal learning, I voted in favour of the resolution, because the problem of youth unemployment is so serious that extraordinary measures are needed.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), in writing. – (PT) According to Eurostat, there were more than 5.5 million unemployed young people in the European Union in March 2012, equivalent to an unemployment rate of 22.6%. The most serious cases are found in Greece (51.2% in January 2012) and Spain (51.1%), with Portugal having a youth unemployment rate of 36.2%. I would like to congratulate the European Commission for the Leonardo da Vinci Programme and the Erasmus First Job and Erasmus for All initiatives. However, it is urgent that new measures are adopted to stimulate youth employment so that European young people have the opportunity to demonstrate their academic and professional skills. It is urgent to restructure the EUR 82 billion of the Structural Fund budget announced by the European Commission so as to stimulate jobs, inject credit into the economy and strengthen the single market. It is also important to adopt the new package of measures announced last month by the Commission with the aim of creating more employment opportunities for young people and supporting entrepreneurship. It is important in the next programming

period (2014-2020) to allocate a large part of the European Union's financial resources to supporting the training and education of Europe's young people, as well as stimulating the development of programmes that facilitate their entry into the labour market.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted for the European Parliament resolution on the Youth Opportunities Initiative. Young people are suffering labour discrimination as regards their access to and permanence in the labour market as a consequence of their precarious situation and temporary contracts. I believe mobility and the opportunity to study and work in another Member State could be an important step for young people to gain better access to the labour market. Therefore, the expansion of the 'Erasmus for All' initiative is necessary and I wish to recommend that a strong emphasis be put in this programme on working experience abroad for students and young people in vocational training, including in the field of entrepreneurship. I deplore the fact that four years into the crisis EUR 82 billion of the Structural Funds budget under the 2007-2013 multiannual financial framework is still to be spent. I urge the Commission to prioritise redeployment of a substantial part of the EUR 82 billion towards projects for young people, and especially towards small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in order to boost decent employment opportunities for young people. The efficient use of these amounts will help increase youth involvement in the economic and social development of Member States.

Ramon Tremosa i Balcells (ALDE), *in writing.* – Youth unemployment is probably, with our high level of debt, one of the biggest problems we have nowadays in Europe. In Catalonia, where I come from, more than 50% of people under 25 are effectively without a job and not studying. This is a disastrous situation for our societies that see how one of the better educated generations in our history has little chances to join the labour force for the foreseeable future. I support thus this resolution, and I want to specially point out the importance of paragraph 19, where the European Parliament calls on the Commission to prioritise the redeployment of the EUR 82 billion still unused from structural funds into fighting youth unemployment. I hope that the Commission takes this idea very much into account.

Niki Tzavela (EFD), *in writing.* – (EL) I voted in favour of the Youth Opportunities Initiative, in the hope that, this time, the European Commission and the Council will take the action needed to apply all the measures that we keep passing. European citizens are bored with reports and motions for resolutions that lead nowhere. They want to see action and results. In Greece, youth unemployment is close to 50 %. As I personally have emphasised on numerous occasions, I am delighted that the initiative includes a proposal to promote the labour mobility of young people throughout the EU, so that they can fill vacancies in countries facing skills and labour shortages. A move such as this would be of vital importance to young people and countries in southern Europe.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing.* – I supported the resolution on measures to tackle youth unemployment as I believe the EU is necessary to overcome this issue. Devising a 'European Investment Plan' to create new jobs, reallocating EU structural funds to projects to create them for young people, and introducing a 'European Youth Guarantee' to ensure that they are not without jobs for more than four months, are among the proposals I voted in favour of. Along with fellow MEPs I call on the Commission and Council to set up a European Quality Charter on Traineeships, to ensure their educational value and avoid exploitation. We also welcome the Commission's plan to present a proposal to the Council on the Youth Guarantee and Traineeship Charter instruments by the end of 2012 and strongly urge Member States to approve the proposals by the end of 2012.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing.* – I supported with my vote this motion for resolution because I believe that its adoption will promote youth access to the labour market and strengthen trainee, internship and apprenticeship status in its 2010 resolution that called upon the European Commission, the Member States, the social partners and other stakeholders.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) This resolution comes after Mr Barroso sent letters to the eight Member States with youth unemployment rates significantly higher than the EU average of 22.4%, including Portugal, and ‘Action teams’ were sent to prepare youth employment plans in these Member States. We are not opposed to the proposals for combating youth unemployment: the Youth Guarantee, the redeployment of part of the unspent Structural Funds budget for 2007-2013 to projects for young people and assistance for SMEs, increased co-financing rates for these eight Member States and implementation of the Maternity Leave Directive. However, at the same time, the resolution also supports the deepening of the single market as a means to create jobs, the incorporation of youth unemployment in the European Semester, a more coordinated strategy between national educational and training plans and labour market needs, and investment in labour mobility. We completely reject these measures, which profoundly undermine the creation of jobs with rights. Jobs will only be created by a decisive break with the so-called austerity policies that the majority of this Parliament have supported through economic governance policies, the Stability and Growth Pact, and the Fiscal Treaty.

Report: Edit Bauer (A7-0160/2012)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this report, taking note of the latest studies that show that women earn about 16.4% less than men doing the same jobs. We are mistaken if we think that inequality has been consigned to history. The truth is that inequality has even been increasing in some Member States. I agree that the European Commission should reinforce the existing legislation by introducing sanctions to advance the achievement of gender equality and that the European Union should, once again, set an example for the rest of the world.

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) Equal pay for male and female workers for equal work is a key factor in achieving gender equality, as referred to in the European Union primary legislation. I believe the recommendations set out in this resolution can contribute to reducing the gender pay gap, and also to fighting against gender discrimination, professional segregation or undervaluing of women’s work. I voted in favour of this report.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted for this report because in 2012 it is unacceptable that women across the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men. It is appalling that despite the significant body of legislation in force for almost 40 years and the actions taken on trying to reduce the gap progress is extremely slow and in some Member States the gap has even widened. The causes of the persistent high gender pay gap are complex and go far beyond the single issue of equal pay for equal work. These causes include social and economic factors, undervaluing of women’s work, inequality in the balancing of work and private life, traditions and stereotypes. For this reason I believe that the implementation of the principle of equal pay for the same work and for work of equal value is crucial to achieving gender equality and to fighting any kind of discrimination against women.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) As the Slovak rapporteur Ms Bauer, a member of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), my own group, has pointed out, 'we call on the Commission to address the unjust discrimination against women and to make the legislation on diminishing the gender pay gap more effective.' I am as outraged as she is to note that the gap is still extremely wide. We had to send out a strong signal. The principle of equal pay is already enshrined in a 2006 directive. Injustices of this nature can no longer be tolerated. As Chair of the voluntary organisation *Femmes au Centre* (Women at the Centre), I would like to make the point that attitudes have to change, in civil society, in politics and in business.

Zoltán Bagó (PPE), *in writing*. – (HU) I supported this report, which seeks to formulate proposals to perfect legislation on bridging the pay gap between men and women. Additionally, the report proposes the creation of a Europe-wide strategy.

The mean gender pay gap is still 16.4% in the European Union, and in some Member States it is rising. The underlying reasons are complex and interconnected.

I agree with the report's intention to call on the Commission to review the 2006 Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. I consider the proposed amendments to be comprehensive and thorough.

The proposal that the European Parliament should introduce a 'Women and Business in Europe' prize that would be awarded to employers that promote women, support female managers and practise equal pay is a remarkable initiative.

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The principle of equal pay for women and men enshrined in the Treaty of Rome in 1957 is still not being fully respected in the European Union. The latest available data indicate that European women receive, on average, about 17% less than men. The causes of the pay gap are complex and multiple: direct and indirect discrimination, social and economic factors, undervaluing of women's work, inequality in the balancing of work and private life, and traditions and stereotyping. With this in mind, I voted for the report, which stresses that the Commission should revise Directive 2006/54/EC to improve the effectiveness of European legislation, so that equal pay concepts are made clearer and more detailed, awareness is raised among employers, the availability of statistically rigorous data is improved and, finally, job classification is introduced to enable possible pay discrimination to be identified.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) Despite the fact that equal pay has been enshrined in European treaties for almost 40 years, this principle is still not being respected. Women earn on average 16% less than men for equal work. This gap would even seem to be widening in some Member States. Furthermore, no sanctions have been taken to date against employers who fail to comply. This is unacceptable. It beggars belief that the Commission and the Member States have not yet been able to resolve this situation, despite the insistence of the European Parliament. It is high time we had genuine pay equality between men and women. In this respect, I firmly support this report, which urges the Commission to reinforce current legislation and provide effective and dissuasive sanctions. Furthermore, I believe that it is crucially important to focus on female employability, particularly in decision-making posts, as that would appear to be the key to closing the persistent pay gap between men and women.

Sergio Berlato (PPE), in writing. – (IT) According to the latest available data, women in the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men, and the gender pay gap in the Member States varies between 4.4% and 27.6%. Therefore, despite the significant body of legislation in force for almost 40 years and the actions taken and resources spent on trying to reduce the gap, progress is extremely slow. Implementation of the principle of equal pay for the same work and for work of equal value is crucial to achieving gender equality.

Directive 2006/54/EC has contributed to the improvement of women's situation in the labour market but has not profoundly changed the legislation on closing the gender pay gap. Moreover, preliminary studies show that little or no change has been made to Member States' legislation. Given the complexity of the issue, I believe it requires not only improvement of the current legislation but also a Europe-wide strategy to address the gender pay gap, as well as strong EU leadership in coordinating policies and promoting good practices.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Equality between women and men is a fundamental right and common value of the European Union. It is also a prerequisite for achieving the EU's objectives of economic growth, employment and social cohesion within the Union. In the last decades, significant progress has been made to ensure equal opportunities for women and men. This is due primarily to legislation concerning equal treatment, to measures aimed at incorporating the equal opportunities principle into all EU policies, and to specific measures aimed at promoting women. However, current data show that women's hourly earnings are still on average 15% less than men's, and this figure remains steady. Eliminating the gender pay gap can help create a more equitable and cohesive society. In this way, women are further empowered and their financial independence is enhanced. Moreover, higher remuneration for women during their active lifetime can lead to creating the premises for reducing poverty levels, especially at the time of their retirement.

Vito Bonsignore (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The 'equal work, equal pay' principle is part of the system of freedoms on which our systems of civil law are founded. The fact that this principle has only been partially implemented requires us to engage in some honest reflection, such as that which underlies Ms Bauer's report. Gender equality in the workplace takes on strategic importance in view of two key changes that characterise the contemporary scene: on the one hand the push to increase production and productivity as a way out of the crisis, and on the other the need to reform our welfare systems with an emphasis on subsidiarity and the family. On both fronts, appropriate professional recognition for women is a *sine qua non* for the profound changes that Europe must undertake to respond to today's challenges. In a moderate and liberal view of society, the task of gradually implementing the necessary changes would be left to society itself. However, the limited implementation of what is a substantial body of legislation (at EU and Member State level), the back-peddalling on pay alignment and the repeated stalling due in part to the effects of the crisis mean that the problem requires special attention and may be resolved not least through stricter, more effective and more binding measures. I therefore announce that I am voting in favour of the report.

Philippe Boulland (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the own-initiative report on equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value. The facts are damning: jobs occupied by women are not valued as much in financial, symbolic or economic terms as those occupied by men. Whether due to social attitudes, occupational segregation or fixed stereotypes, the principle of equal pay has been mishandled by the

Member States. We need to understand this problem better, fight stereotyping and share best practice if we are to close the pay gap between men and women, which is a matter of urgency. Consequently, if there is no concrete progress on the legislative front, we will not be able to promote the presence of both women and men in all places where decisions are taken or provide better information. That is why I support the idea of creating provision for collective redress and administrative sanctions for non-compliance with the principle of equal pay for men and women for the same work.

Alain Cadec (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the Bauer report on pay gaps between men and women for the same work. I am convinced that this genuine discrimination against women is a question of society's attitude, and that the European Parliament, as an institution that represents the Union's citizens, must show its commitment to changing that attitude. I therefore approve of the implementation of the principle of equal pay, which is simply a matter of common sense. I hope that the Commission will table a proposal very shortly along these lines.

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), *in writing*. – (SV) It is important to fight for equal pay for equal work for men and women. The European Parliament can play an important role in shaping opinions on the pay gap and can highlight the debate, but it is not the right forum for decisions on pay issues. Therefore, I voted against the recommendations to the Commission on the application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value, as it is the responsibility of the Member States to decide on these matters.

Emer Costello (S&D), *in writing*. – I welcome the Parliament resolution on the issue of narrowing the gender pay gap. It is totally unacceptable that women still earn on average 16.4% less than men in the 21st century.

The EU has been a positive experience in the main for women. Directives on equal pay, anti-sex discrimination, and maternity rights have proven effective tools in the struggle for equality.

However, Member States have been slow to tackle the issue of the gender pay gap through their own national legislation. There is therefore an urgent need to oblige Member States to address the issue through legislation, which would include sanctions where action is not being taken to combat these inequalities.

Moreover, the principle of equal pay must apply to part-time work. Women are more often employed in part-time work than men. The gender pay gap for those engaged in part-time work is almost twice as wide as among full-time workers.

I also welcome the Parliament proposals that Member States consider appointing an Equal Pay Champion to monitor and report on the situation in individual Member States. Having an equal pay watchdog will nudge Member States along and ensure that political will for these proposals does not fall by the wayside.

Marielle de Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The pay gap between men and women is still a worrying reality in Europe. Women earn on average 16.4% less than men, for equal work. This is no longer acceptable. Yet, for the last 40 years or so, the European Union has tried in vain to improve matters in this respect. This innovative resolution has provided us with a new and sensible way forwards in our attempts to reduce these inequalities. It proposes to step up penalties for businesses that fail to comply with the principle of pay equality. They could now face the suspension of any subsidies and also administrative

penalties. It is up to the Commission to propose innovative texts and to the Member States to find the right solutions to the pay gap between men and women.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I am delighted that this report has been adopted. Recent studies show that, in the European Union as a whole, women earn on average 16.4% less than men and the pay gap between women and men ranges from 4.4% to 27.6%, depending on the Member State. It is clear that in spite of the significant body of legislation in force for almost 40 years and the actions taken and resources spent to reduce the gap, progress remains extremely slow (the disparity at EU level was 17.7% in 2006, 17.6% in 2007, 17.4% in 2009 and 16.4% in 2010).

In the Bauer report adopted today, Parliament calls on the Member States to implement and enforce Directive 2006/54/EC consistently, to encourage the private and public sectors to play a more active role in closing the gender pay gap, and to enable the social partners to negotiate plans for equality between men and women at company level, as well as at national and European level.

Tamás Deutsch (PPE), in writing. – (HU) Following the adoption of the European Parliament resolution in 2008, Member States failed to do everything in their power to enforce the principle of equal pay for male and female workers as prescribed therein. The resolution allowed for the application of sanctions and penalties against employers who failed to comply with the principle of equal pay. Member States should make use of all means provided for in the resolution to reduce the existing pay gap between male and female workers.

The aim of the Bauer report is to call on the European Commission to review and amend the directive in force in order to enable us to combat discrimination against women as effectively as possible. The report formulates specific proposals for nine different areas, and calls on the Commission to draw up by 15 February 2013 a proposal for an amended directive that takes these recommendations into account and protects the rights of female employees more effectively. The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) will support the report at the plenary vote.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Being a committed defender of the principle of equality, I have to support initiatives intended to protect the employment rights of women, such as this report advocating the legitimate principle of equal pay for equal work. Not only does fairness demand equal rights for men and women, but the law should also take account of particular needs related to gender, which for women obviously include areas such as maternity protection and reconciling work and family life. That is why, in addition to equal pay, it is critical to demand that women are not systematically penalised in their careers because of their gender or for being mothers.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The report drafted by Edit Bauer presents a set of recommendations to the Commission on the application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value. The principle of gender pay equality is established in the Treaty of Rome. Despite more than 40 years of legislation on this issue, the reality shows there is still much to do. The pay gap is a reality that becomes worse with age, particularly following the birth of the first child. This means that the pensions women receive at the end of their active lives are lower than those for men, so increasing the risk of poverty amongst women. As Europe ages and is in need of measures to increase the birth rate, motherhood and maternity leave should not be prejudicial to women. For this reason, there should be absolute respect for the principle

of equal pay for equal work. I welcome the adoption of this report, for which I voted, and I hope that the Member States, following the guidance of the Court of Justice of the European Union, will comply with and enforce the legislation so as to reduce this pay gap, which, according to the OECD, stands at 17.1%.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The report concerns what is, regrettably, a continuing problem. Not only is dealing with it long overdue, but the problem is getting worse in many Member States. The report provides data proving there is a gender pay gap in EU countries and proposals for dealing with this inequality, both through EU policies and in national programmes. We regret the fact that several of the amendments we proposed to this report have not been accepted. They would have substantially improved the document, which is undermined by being incomplete in several areas. For example, this report recognises that individual wage negotiations exacerbate pay gaps, but does not advocate collective agreements as an alternative. Worse still, it includes a paragraph proposing that flexicurity is studied to see how it could combat pay inequality, when it is well known that it exacerbates the problem. Despite this, the report contains various proposals with which we agree: increased women's pay and increased funding for programmes aimed specifically at combating pay inequality, amongst others. That is why we voted in favour.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), in writing. – (SK) According to the latest provisional and incomplete figures, women across the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men in the EU and the gender pay gap varies between 4.4% and 27.6% in the Member States. Despite the significant body of legislation in force for almost 40 years and the actions taken and resources spent on trying to reduce the gap, progress is extremely slow, and in some Member States the gap has even widened. The causes include direct and indirect discrimination, as well as social and economic factors, occupational and highly segregated labour markets, undervaluing of women's work, inequality in the balancing of work and private life, and traditions and stereotyping, including the choice of educational paths, in educational guidance, in access to trades and professions, particularly for girls and women, leading them towards typically female professions, which are less well paid. Implementation of the principle of equal pay for the same work and for work of equal value is crucial to achieving gender equality. I think it is essential to take measures to promote professional and career development under conditions of genuine gender equality. This principle forms part of the concept of corporate social responsibility, which is promoted at international and national level and needs to be developed in all the Member States.

Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (PPE), in writing. – (HU) I supported Ms Bauer's report, as it examines a basic principle that had already been laid down in the Treaty of Rome. It is time to make it clear that just as there must be no differentiation between men and women when it comes to fundamental rights, there must also be no discrimination between male and female workers in any regard, and that includes pay. The report tabled before us offers a very comprehensive and detailed supplementation and analysis of the Commission's efforts, which have been drafted several times but still suffer from considerable deficiencies in respect of problematic issues that remain in this field, such as job classification, social dialogue, or potential sanctions on certain employers. The inclusion of collective redress among the recommendations of the report is particularly important; the report is very progressive in recognising that although not mandatory, this form of legal remedy, which is becoming increasingly present in several areas, and not just economic ones, is

recommended for all Member States in order to allow them to enforce fundamental European policies and values in everyday life.

Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The issue of equal pay for men and women has been on the political agenda for very many years now, but progress has been extremely slow. That is why I voted in favour of this text, which recommends, amongst other things, laying down stricter penalties for employers who practise pay discrimination of this nature. While I am not in favour of imposing penalties right, left and centre, it is true to say that certain employers today do not comply with rules which were laid down in the past. In 2012, it is no longer acceptable for women to earn around 17% less than men.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) One of the EU's fundamental principles in the prevention of discrimination is 'equal pay for equal work'. However, full-time women workers in the EU are paid on average 16.4% less than their male counterparts. Furthermore, poverty suffered by women is continuing to increase and worsens as they get older, particularly upon retirement. At the same time, female students achieve a higher pass rate at school than their male counterparts and 59% of university graduates are women. In spite of half a century of legislation to ensure equal pay for women and men for equal work, it is quite clear that these inequalities still exist today. I voted in favour of the report by my fellow member Ms Bauer, as I believe that, to remedy this situation, we must strengthen current legislation. This injustice is an issue of human rights and economics. The following are some of the proposals to combat these inequalities more effectively: impose sanctions by, for example, blocking the award of European funds if certain criteria are violated; develop pay transparency within companies; support those bodies which fight for greater equality and strengthen their legal powers to impose sanctions.

Kent Johansson, Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE), *in writing*. – (SV) We welcome the report on the application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value (2011/2285(INI)). However, we do not share the view expressed in the report that 'a decentralised and individualised system of wage setting should therefore be assessed as a rather worrying development'. On the contrary, individual pay reviews and negotiations should be the norm and will allow us to tackle pay discrimination, provided that they form part of an open and transparent process.

Philippe Juvin (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) This legislative report aims to request the Commission to review Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. This directive does still not enable us to eliminate many types of discrimination against women. For instance, the gender pay gap at the expense of women still exists. This report recommends improvements in nine areas, including definitions, work evaluation and job classification, assessment by equality bodies, legal remedy, social dialogue and sanctions. This is a balanced report, which I voted for in plenary. It was adopted by a large majority and I welcome that.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) The results of research show that women are paid an average of around 16% less than men in the European Union Member States, and that this gap is closing extraordinarily slowly. Many cultural, ideological, economic and other factors are responsible for this situation. The complexity of the problem and its many causes make it much more difficult to fight against discriminatory practices in the form of lower pay for the same work carried out by women. Nevertheless, given that EU

directives and resolutions lay down the objective of equal treatment for workers of both sexes, including as regards pay, I believe that we should step up all measures aimed at improving compliance with the above-mentioned legislation. One way of achieving this would be to introduce workplace pay audits and publish the audit reports. Bodies involved in promoting and monitoring equality should also play a greater role, since they could provide the victims of employers' discriminatory practices with support in the form of information and advice. I believe that it is particularly important to raise awareness of the problem under discussion, since it is often pushed to one side in public debate. This means that its significance is wrongly underestimated, which is a direct factor in the lack of improvement as regards women's situation on the labour market.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR), *in writing*. – (PL) Like the rest of my group, I abstained from voting on the Bauer report. Although the statistics do not lie, and pay-related discrimination is undoubtedly still a problem, I do not subscribe to the idea of adopting legislation at EU level on employment issues such as pay, or on social insurance issues. I believe that the individual Member States should be responsible for decisions on such matters. This does not change the fact that statistics on the pay gap between women and men are alarming, with the gap varying from 1.9% to 27.6% within the EU.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) Despite the fact that there have been EU legal provisions in relation to equality since 1975, the earnings gap between men and women continues to exist. I support the rapporteur's call on the Commission to change the directive so that legislation can be made more effective and this unjust discrimination against women can be dealt with appropriately. It is necessary to fight for equality; unfair conditions and treatment cannot be simply accepted. This is the only way to guarantee progress in social development.

Sergej Kozlík (ALDE), *in writing*. – (SK) On average, women in the EU earn on average 16.4% less than men, and the differences in the individual Member States range from 4.4% to 27.9%. This is despite the fact that a legislation limiting the difference has been in force for almost 40 years. The causes of the pay gap are complex, and include direct and indirect discrimination, as well as social and economic factors. They also include the undervaluing of women's work, stereotypes of choice, and inequalities in work-life balances. According to experts, direct and indirect discrimination is responsible for half of the pay gap. The Europe 2020 strategy aims to increase the employment of men and women aged 20 to 64 years to 75%. There must also be a substantial change in the occupancy of women of managerial positions, and a review of existing legislation. I voted for the report.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Although the statistics we have are only provisional, the picture they paint of gender equality in the workplace is not encouraging. Women in the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men for the same work or work of equal value. Moreover, the gender pay gap varies between 4.4% and 27.6%, a huge range that is cause for concern. An urgent commitment is therefore needed to reduce this gap in all areas of employment. Bringing down barriers to access, improving selection criteria, fighting gender discrimination and acting at all levels of work in both the private and the public sectors are the ambitious aims set by the report. I voted in favour.

Constance Le Grip (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the own-initiative report by Ms Bauer with recommendations to the Commission on application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value. Despite legally-binding European legislation which has been in force since 1975, there is still a real

pay gap between men and women. The aim of the report is to compile an inventory of recommendations relating to what appears to be best practice by Member States in order to tackle the gender pay gap in all Member States. Although these recommendations are not binding, I am delighted that the report calls on the Commission to examine, in the context of its forthcoming proposal for a horizontal instrument on collective redress, the inclusion of collective redress against violations of the equal pay principle.

Astrid Lulling (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Since 1975, we have had an excellent directive on equal treatment for men and women in terms of pay. It was recast in 2006. All women or even men who feel that they are victims of discrimination may have recourse to it, but they also have to dare to do so.

It is not true to say that no sanctions have been taken against employers guilty of discrimination against women under the principle of 'equal pay for equal work'. In Luxembourg, after 1975, hundreds of millions of Luxembourg francs were paid retroactively to women because the State, a public institution or even a commune had not applied the 1975 directive correctly.

According to this report, in the European Union as a whole, women's pay is on average 16.4% less than that of men and, depending on the Member State, the pay gap between women and men ranges from 4.4% to 27.6%.

What matters is not the average size of the gap, but what women earn compared to men within the same company, or the same sector if there is a collective agreement, for the same work.

We do not need new European legislation. What we need is to apply the legislation that we already have effectively on the ground. What we particularly need is for the social partners who negotiate collective agreements not to disregard this legislation in future.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for this report as I strongly believe in equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Women in the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men: that is unacceptable. I agree with the rapporteur on the need for strong EU leadership in coordinating policies, promoting good practices and involving the various actors, such as the European social partners and non-governmental organisations, with a view to creating a Europe-wide strategy to address the gender pay gap.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I believe it is crucial to apply the principle of equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value to achieve gender equality. This is why I voted in favour.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE), *in writing*. – (SK) I congratulate my colleague, Edit Bauer, for preparing this comprehensive report on the application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value. Unfortunately, the sad fact arises from it that the principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women exists at the theoretical, rather than the practical, level, as women earn on average 16.4% less than men in the European Union, and the pay gap between women and men in the Member States ranges between 4.4% and 27.9%. Changes for the better, however, happen too slowly, and the pay gap is even widening in some Member States. Moreover, women students, who account for as much as 59% of all university graduates, achieve greater success in

their studies, and yet their subsequent salaries fall far below those of their male colleagues. In particular, large differences can be seen in the salaries of highly-qualified women and men. In terms of the competitiveness of the European economy, which must increasingly focus on innovation, this demotivating approach is an unacceptable waste of human potential. I therefore agree with the rapporteur's view that a labour market free of stereotypes would contribute to an increase in the gross domestic product of the Member States. Eliminating the pay gap between men and women remains a political priority common to all Member States and European institutions, and I therefore support the presented proposal.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – Women across the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men in the EU, progress is extremely slow and in some Member States the gap has even widened. Everything has to be done to achieve total equality. I voted in favour.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) The same wage for the same work should be something that we all take for granted. Unfortunately, things are still quite different in reality in some cases. We need to take action to bring this to a stop. Although this report addresses the problem, it unfortunately confuses different facts. After all, the fact that women still earn less than men is generally not so much because they are the victims of general discrimination, than due to the fact that they are far more likely to have part-time jobs and are less likely to hold management positions. The latter point is quite natural, after all a young mother cannot logically dedicate herself as intensively to her career plans as a man. Nature has allocated the roles quite clearly here, something that left-wing ideology or humanitarianism cannot change. If the same wage is demanded for the same work, then we must also accept different wages for different work. Anyone who accepts more responsibility or offers greater performance must be able to earn more, irrespective of whether they are male or female. Because the report completely denies this logic, calling for conscious inequality of treatment of the sexes, in gender mainstreaming for example, I have voted against it.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), *in writing.* – (LT) The report on new measures to close the gender pay gap, approved by the European Parliament today, is very important. While we are trying to strengthen equal rights to fair pay for work in Europe, research continues to show the tendency whereby on average women in the European Union earn 16.4% less than men, and in some EU Member States this disparity is even increasing. This is unacceptable. Such results also show that the measures applied until now have not been effective enough and we need to seek measures that could really change the situation. It is necessary to ensure the elimination of discrimination that causes the gender pay gap, the fragmentation of the labour market according to gender, as well as under-valuation of the work women do or deep-rooted stereotypes. It is also undoubtedly the case that employers are largely responsible for this situation in the labour market. I therefore believe that as well as the proposal for EU Member States to monitor more closely the implementation of legislation regulating pay for men and women, there is a need for measures such as sanctions, the limitation of public benefits, subsidies or public procurement procedures. These are necessary measures, which would effectively encourage employers to avoid discrimination and evaluate their employees on the basis of their competence and performance rather than their gender.

Tiziano Motti (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted for this report because I find it unacceptable that the gender pay gap in the third millennium should still be 17%. It is a common saying

that 'a woman's day lasts 27 hours', referring to her ability to juggle home, work, family and, if there is any time left, leisure. It is unacceptable, therefore, that a woman's pay does not match her tireless efforts. Today we call on the Commission for new measures to reduce the gender pay gap in all EU policies and national programmes, not least through tougher penalties, administrative fines and disqualification from public benefits and subsidies. There is already a directive, adopted in 2008, which experts consider has become a dead letter because of opposition from national legislators, who have not transposed its main principles. According to Eurostat data, the widest pay gaps are found in Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany and Slovakia, while the smallest are in Belgium, Italy, Malta and Slovenia. 'A trouble shared is not a trouble halved' but, if I may say so, as an Italian I am pleased that Italy is already on the right road to closing this gap.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) It is a sad fact that today, decades after women's emancipation, we are still having to fight for gender equality. The aim of the report by Ms Bauer, which I fully support, is to lay the foundations for European legislation that can ensure equal pay for men and women for equal work. The existing laws are not enough to close the gap between men's and women's pay, with the result that women's average wages, although they vary from one country to another, are always lower. To guarantee equality, therefore, we need transparent information about wage levels, monitoring of Member States to ensure the principle of equal pay, and awareness and dissemination of women's rights in the workplace.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing*. – (EL) I voted in favour of this report. Unequal pay between men and women is still a fact of life, with recent official Eurostat statistics confirming the pay gap between the two sexes and illustrating that it ranges from 4.4 % to 27.6 % in the Member States, despite the numerous legislative provisions governing this issue. The proposals for a regulation to introduce job evaluation schemes free from gender bias and discrimination and to create a guidebook which companies and the Member States can consult in order to decide the value of work and compare jobs must be put into practice immediately. It is a primary concern of every Member State to apply both new and previous principles of equal pay to male and female workers, if we are to be able to talk of work of equal value before the end of 2012.

Alojz Peterle (PPE), *in writing*. – (SL) I voted in favour of this report because I firmly believe that we need to revise the directive in question, so that we can eliminate as soon as possible the disparities, that is the discrimination, between pay for men and women.

Phil Prendergast (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for this report on equal pay for male and female workers for equal work because more needs to be done to promote career development under conditions of genuine gender equality.

We need to broaden women's career prospects and change education patterns to have a positive influence in addressing the gender pay gap. It is important to assess the impact of flexicurity strategies on the gender pay gap and determine how these strategies can help tackle gender discrimination. Member States, workers' and employers' groups need to work together to develop an objective job evaluation instrument to help reduce the gender pay gap.

We need to improve and simplify the procedures already in place for defending the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and prohibit any and all forms of gender-based discrimination. Member States must provide for the possibility of collective redress against violations of the equal pay principle and allow individuals and representative bodies to

bring cases on behalf of complainants to court. We should continue to closely monitor the situation in individual Member States and keep national parliaments and the European Parliament informed of, continuing gender-based discrimination, and improvements in equal pay.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – (FR) I am in favour. The principle of equal pay was restated in the 2006 Directive and we were told that we had to take new measures. Since then, nothing has happened. The European Parliament already made very precise proposals in 2008, particularly in relation to taking account of bonuses and other benefits, and the transparency of pay scales. Today, we are repeating these proposals. However, this time the ball is in the Commission's court. Pay gaps are symptomatic of discrimination against women: regardless of their educational level, income or occupational sector, women are paid less well than their male counterparts. Nowadays, female students achieve a higher pass rate at school, but instead of finding this an asset, they continue to play a secondary role in our economies.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) According to the latest figures, women across the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men, and the gender pay gap varies between 4.4% and 27.6% in the Member States, despite the resources allocated to reduce this gap and measures adopted in this respect. The current economic crisis has led to increased unemployment rates among women and, in some Member States, to an increased gender pay gap. It is absolutely necessary to take measures that promote professional and career development under conditions of genuine gender equality. We do not want the principle of 'equal pay for male and female workers for equal work' to remain a mere principle on paper; therefore, we must encourage enterprises to put it into practice.

Olga Sehnalová (S&D), *in writing.* – (CS) Application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or equivalent work by men and women is absolutely essential to the achievement of gender equality. At present, women are paid 16.4% less than men in the EU for equal work, while in the Czech Republic they are paid up to 25% less. I have therefore voted in favour of Edit Bauer's proposal. The current version of Directive 2006/54/EC is, in my view, wholly unsatisfactory in this regard, and there has been no fundamental change in the legislation on eliminating the pay gap. We are therefore asking the European Commission to table amendments as quickly as possible, primarily in relation to analysing the current situation with regard to the evaluation and classification of work, strengthening the social dialogue and introducing sanctions for breaches of this principle.

Debora Serracchiani (S&D), *in writing.* – (IT) The recasting of Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation has led to changes in the sector, but much remains to be done to reduce the gender pay gap. That is why I voted for the report on equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value. I believe it is right for the European Commission to put pressure on the national governments to adopt measures aimed at reducing the gender gap and also to provide for sanctions in cases of infringements of the principle of equal pay.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) According to the latest figures, women in the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men, and the gender pay gap in the Member States varies between 4.4% and 27.6%. Despite the significant body of legislation in force for almost 40 years and the actions taken and resources spent on trying to reduce the gap, progress is extremely slow. The causes of the persistent high gender pay

gap are complex, multiple and often interrelated, and go far beyond the single issue of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. Through this vote we will be seeking to speed up the assertion of the principle of equal pay for men and women.

Csaba Sógor (PPE), *in writing.* – (HU) The principle of equal pay for female and male workers and the objective of eliminating the gender pay gap was laid down by the European Union as early as in 1975, in the Equal Pay Directive. Yet it is common knowledge that the problem persists in all Member States to this day, though the pay gap varies between individual countries; some countries are attempting to implement the principle of gender equality in terms of pay through specific measures.

Finland, for example, introduced equality supplements, Sweden adopted a law that requires employees to conduct pay surveys every three years and address instances of inequitable discrimination, Slovenia and Denmark award companies that fill executive positions with women, and so on.

I therefore believe that the EU should also assist in bridging the pay gap by raising awareness of national good practices and by encouraging their mutual application.

Laurence J. A. J. Stassen (NI), *in writing.* – (NL) The Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) fully supports the 'equal pay for equal work' principle. Men and women should be paid the same for the same work. What the PVV opposes is the European Commission, an unelected and undemocratic body, interfering with the national policies of Member States. This report wants to impose EU legislation on Member States, even though they are the best equipped to make policy in order to address pay discrimination. The PVV will abstain from the vote for these reasons.

Marc Tarabella (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) Equal pay for men and women for equal work is a goal that remains to be achieved. It is a primary objective of gender equality, in the broad sense of the term, but it cannot be achieved unless all Member States strive their utmost to reach it. The Commission must be in a position to reinforce existing legislation and impose appropriate sanctions against those who do not comply with it. In the EU, women still earn 16.4% less than men. This is an unacceptable gap that must not continue to widen.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The European Parliament has asked the Commission to review Directive 2006/54/EC in accordance with the recommendations set out in the annex to this resolution by 15 February 2013 at the latest to address aspects of the gender pay gap issue, including: definitions, analysis of the situation and transparency of results, work evaluation and job classification, equality bodies and legal remedy, social dialogue, prevention of discrimination, gender mainstreaming, sanctions, and streamlining of EU regulation and EU policy. Despite the significant body of legislation in force for nearly 40 years and the actions taken and resources employed in an attempt to reduce the gender pay gap, progress has been extremely slow and in some Member States the gap has even widened. Action by the European Union is, therefore, urgently required. I voted in favour of the report.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the report with recommendations to the Commission on application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value. I believe that, according to European legislation and case-law, employers must apply the same evaluation criteria to all staff, remuneration arrangements must be understandable and transparent, and the

criteria applied must take into account the nature and type of work and must be free from discriminatory elements. The concept of 'equal pay for work of equal value' must not be biased by a gender-stereotyped approach. Societal roles that have hitherto significantly influenced education and employment paths must be broken away from, and education can and must contribute to eradicating gender stereotypes from society. I welcome the initiative to create the 'Women and Business in Europe' prize that could be awarded to employers (undertakings, institutions and authorities) which lead the way in promoting women, supporting female managers and practising equal pay. I welcome the Commission's Equal Pay Day initiative, first established on 5 March 2011 and celebrated for the second time on 2 March 2012.

Ramon Tremosa i Balcells (ALDE), *in writing*. – I cannot understand how, even today, we still have to call for equal pay for equal work for women in the EU. Somehow I feel ashamed to have this report in the agenda today. We all have mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, friends... we know them, we know how they work, how well they work and we know their competitiveness and efficiency, which is even higher than men in many cases. But unfortunately statistics show that women across the European Union earn on average 16.4% less than men in the EU. The difference is higher for unqualified women. I hope this will be the last time that I have to vote for gender equality in this Parliament.

Frank Vanhecke (EFD), *in writing*. – (NL) First of all, as a matter of principle: we are obviously in favour of equal pay for equal work for men and women. To me, it is just as obvious that women, given their essential role in raising children, deserve additional social protection. Full stop.

Nevertheless, I repeat that we must respect the principle of subsidiarity when it comes to employment law and social security and that we should not be siphoning off more and more powers to the European Union. Yet again, this report is full to the brim with proposals that bring nothing new to the table, but which cost handfuls of taxpayer money. Blob, yet another 'European Prize', blob new 'awareness campaigns' – and this is all for an issue of which our Member States are definitely aware and for which they are already looking for solutions themselves. I have therefore abstained from the vote.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing*. – Action needs to be taken when it comes to the principle of equal pay for men and women. Progress in this area has been slow: some Member States have even seen the pay gap become wider. Currently, women across the EU earn 16.4% less than men. In addition to this, the gender pay gap can have an adverse effect on women's pensions and as a result a larger number of women will live in poverty in their old age. Although there is some legislation in place to deal with the issue of equal pay, more must be done to make sure this is implemented effectively by Member States. I support calls for employers to become more transparent regarding wages, bonuses and other perks paid to staff to ensure that people doing the same job get the same deal. It also goes without saying that the concept of the value of work should be based on qualifications and skills, with the aim of promoting equality between men and women.

Kristian Vigenin (S&D), *in writing*. – (BG) Equality is one of the fundamental values which we Socialists in the European Parliament defend. I supported the report on the application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value because I believe that men and women must be equal not only before the law, but they must also receive equal pay for equal work in practice. This is specifically the area where one of the most widespread discriminatory practices is evident, and the

majority of victims are women – they receive on average 16.4% less than their male colleagues.

It is particularly important that we approved the proposal to impose sanctions on employers failing to comply with already existing legislation, including administrative fines and depriving them of the right to enjoy State subsidies. For the first time, the notion of having a mechanism for monitoring progress in Member States was also supported by a large majority. The pay for the same work must be the same not only irrespective of gender, but also irrespective of national, ethnic or other background. I hope that this report will enable us to bring about equality in deed, and not just in words.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing.* – The rapporteur underlines the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work. This principle has been enshrined in the Treaties of the European Community since 1957. This report reiterates the recommendations adopted by the European Parliament in 2008. Equal pay for equal work is the concept that individuals doing the same work should receive the same remuneration. In America, for example, the law states that ‘employers may not pay unequal wages to men and women who perform jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort and responsibility, and that are performed under similar working conditions within the same establishment’. It is most commonly used in a context of sexual discrimination, as equal pay for women. Equal pay does not simply relate to basic salary but also to the full range of benefits, non-salary payments, bonuses and allowances that are paid. I supported this report with my vote because its adoption will be vital to prevent poverty and social exclusion of women of all age groups.

Marina Yannakoudakis (ECR), *in writing.* – I, along with the UK Conservative Delegation, voted against this report. My colleagues and I are firmly committed to closing the gender pay gap. We believe that women must receive equal pay for work of equal value and that women must have equal opportunities in the work place. However, I do not believe that this can be achieved through legislation at the EU level. While this is a non-legislative report, it gives the green light to the Commission to legislate on equal pay and to reinforce this legislation with sanctions. Legislation is bad for business and bad for women as it may ultimately harm women’s employment opportunities. We have seen how EU employment legislation can do more harm than good, no matter how noble the intentions may be. Nevertheless the report highlights how severe the problem of unequal pay remains and the EU must work together to act. We must tackle the inequity of the gender pay gap by sharing best practice, not by imposing top-down legislation.

Iva Zanicchi (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The gender pay gap in the European Union is still too wide, averaging around 18%. Many actions have been taken and considerable resources have been spent in recent years on trying to reduce the gap, but clearly they have not been enough. I therefore voted in favour of the text that was put to the vote today, as it calls for greater transparency in assessing women’s work, inclusion of the gender dimension and appropriate sanctions to induce the Member States to take the necessary steps in the event of infringement of the principle of equal pay.

Artur Zasada (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) I voted in favour of the Bauer report in today’s vote. As has been the case repeatedly since 2008, when the European Commission launched an information campaign in several European Union Member States on differences in pay for women and men called ‘Close the gender pay gap’, we have the opportunity to read a

report on this issue. Once again we are also able to bemoan the inequalities in the labour market.

Women and men are paid different amounts for the same work. We should publicise the fact that, on average, women throughout Europe are paid around 16.4% less than men. The pay gap between women and men is even greater in certain countries. These discrepancies have a significant impact on women's earnings throughout their professional careers, and on their pensions. Lower pay means lower pensions and a greater risk of poverty for older women. It is to be welcomed that the European Parliament regards eliminating the pay gap between women and men as a political priority.

Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D), *in writing.* – (PL) It would appear that equal pay for men and women for the same work or for work of the same value should no longer be an issue in Europe. Yet the facts tell a different story. On average, women in the European Union are paid 16.4% less than men. The problem is that the report by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality notes these regrettable facts but does not in return make any concrete proposals to improve the situation.

In my opinion, a particularly important step would be to change work practices for women who have decided to have children. Their working conditions and hours should be much more flexible, and the principle of equal pay for women and men performing the same work should be rigorously observed. A policy of this kind would be in the interest of everyone, not just women, since it embodies the principle of justice, and above all would increase the fertility rate in Europe and prevent the rapid ageing of our continent.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) This report provides data proving that there is a gender pay gap in EU countries, along with proposals for dealing with this inequality, both through EU policies and in national programmes. Considering that the gender pay gap in the EU is as wide as 16.4%, this report is clearly relevant and very much needed. We proposed various amendments to this report, some of which have not been accepted. Several shortcomings of the report have not been addressed, such as it recognises that individual wage negotiations exacerbate pay gaps but does not advocate collective agreements as an alternative. In addition, it includes a paragraph proposing that flexicurity is studied to see how it could combat pay inequality, when equality will never be achieved by increasing job insecurity. Finally, it is important to say that, despite the many reports on this issue, the so-called austerity policies supported by the majority in Parliament put enormous downward pressure on wages, which can only lead to pay inequality continuing and getting worse.

Motion for a resolution: B7-0248/2012

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this motion for a resolution as I agree that the Commission should indicate what actions have been undertaken to solve the problems regarding the flanking measures which make it difficult for SMEs from the EU to provide services in Switzerland, and to convince the Swiss authorities to repeal regulations which oblige foreign enterprises providing cross-border services to deposit a guarantee of financial probity. These obstacles put in the way of European companies by Switzerland should be reviewed and corrected so that both the European Union and Switzerland can mutually benefit from the European Union internal market.

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) I believe that recalling the safeguard clause, together with other measures recently adopted by the Swiss authorities, endangers

the progress achieved so far in implementing existing bilateral agreements between the European Union and Switzerland, and at the same time engenders an adverse situation which is favourable to neither citizens nor economic agents in certain Member States of the European Union. It is necessary for the Swiss authorities to revise the adopted measures, so as to ensure an auspicious climate for the further development of Switzerland's participation in the single market. I voted in favour of this report.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution which deplores the recent decision by the Swiss Confederation to introduce quotas on the number of residence permits granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Even though the Swiss Confederation does not belong to the European Union, under the 1999 Agreement there are not normally quantitative restrictions on long-term residence permits granted to EU citizens. I deplore this decision by the Swiss Confederation which prevents the free movement of people from the countries which have most recently joined the European Union.

Jan Březina (PPE), *in writing.* – (CS) I would like to protest against the decision of the Swiss authorities to reintroduce quotas on the issuing of residency permits to EU citizens who are nationals of the eight Member States that joined the EU in 2004 – therefore including the Czech Republic – thus limiting the free movement of persons introduced under the 1999 Agreement with the EU. I consider this decision to be discriminatory and unlawful, as there is no legal basis for any such national differentiation in the existing treaties between Switzerland and the EU. I would therefore like to call on the Swiss authorities to review their decision and withdraw from invoking the safeguard clause. In this context, I would like to ask the Commission to indicate what actions have been undertaken, since the adoption of the European Parliament's resolution of 7 September 2010, to solve the problems regarding the flanking measures which make it difficult for small and medium-sized enterprises from the EU to provide services in Switzerland, and to convince the Swiss authorities to repeal regulations which oblige foreign enterprises providing cross-border services to deposit a guarantee of financial probity.

Marielle de Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) The European Parliament quite rightly adopted this resolution inviting the Swiss authorities to lift quotas on long-term residence permits granted to nationals of certain EU Member States. The Swiss Government's current policy in this area is at odds with all agreements signed between the Union and the Swiss Confederation. In this respect, it constitutes a clear barrier to the free movement of persons within Europe. The Commission must make immediate contact with the Swiss Federal Council to put an end to this situation, which penalises thousands of European citizens.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The decision taken by Switzerland is contrary to the move towards convergence between it and the European Union and will result in discrimination against Member State nationals that appears to be neither appropriate nor proportional. Switzerland should fully explain this situation and the Union should demand it be brought to an end as quickly as possible. The European Parliament did well to speak out clearly against this measure. Switzerland and the Union have everything to gain from closer relations and from coordinating policies and positions. They have much to lose from entering into pointless disagreements.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The quotas imposed by Switzerland on the number of residence permits granted to nationals from eight EU Member States (Poland,

Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary) are not only highly questionable, they are also detrimental to its relationship with the EU. The agreement on the free movement of people and goods is the keystone of the operation of the European internal market and has been very beneficial for the Swiss economy, even helping that country to quickly recover from the economic and financial crisis. Switzerland has breached European non-discrimination legislation by adopting these measures and has stopped the families of many European citizens from being reunited. There has been little progress in nearly two years of negotiations and not even the visit of the Swiss President and Foreign Minister to Brussels has brought the resolution of the problem closer since the proposals announced have still not been presented. I voted for this resolution because I object to the discriminatory attitude of the Swiss authorities and call on the Swiss Government to end this behaviour, which puts the concept of European citizenship at risk just as we approach 2013, declared to be 'The European Year of Citizens'.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) We have to support the criticisms the motion for a resolution makes of the recent measures announced by Switzerland. However, we draw attention to the fact that the resolution exploits this complaint to defend the single market, demonstrating that the concern has less to do with issues of democracy and more to do with intensifying the process of European integration.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), in writing. – (SK) The Federal Council of the Swiss Confederation decided to introduce quotas on category B residence permits for stays for up to five years granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary, with effect from 1 May 2012. Switzerland has adopted a number of 'flanking measures', accompanying the Free Movement of Persons Agreement, which can hinder the provision of services by EU businesses in Switzerland. According to Court of Justice case-law, many of these flanking measures can only be acceptable if they are proportionate and protect a public interest that is not already protected in the state of origin of the service provider concerned. I think it is somewhat unfortunate that the Swiss authorities have decided to reintroduce quotas on the granting of residence permits for EU citizens who are nationals of the eight Member States that acceded to the EU in 2004, thereby restricting the freedom of movement introduced by the Agreement with the EU in 1999. I believe that, instead of introducing restrictive measures into the existing framework, both sides should take the appropriate steps towards the development of a more appropriate, effective and flexible system of cooperation that would further facilitate the free movement of people.

Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (PPE), in writing. – (HU) I find the restrictive labour market measure adopted by Switzerland discriminatory, and my colleagues in Parliament also strongly denounce it. Our approach is clear: we believe that agreements cannot be interpreted in such a way as to discriminate on the basis of nationality, and they must be adhered to even in times of economic difficulty. What is more, Switzerland must also not forget that its economy benefits from the presence of EU citizens.

I hope that it will be promptly established that Switzerland cannot apply such selective measures after 30 April 2011, and that this may accelerate the withdrawal of the decision, which has neither legal nor economic basis, and cannot be justified by the number of EU citizens intending to settle down in Switzerland, either.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), in writing. – (FR) I support this motion for a resolution, tabled jointly by the main political groups in Parliament, denouncing the measures recently taken

by the Swiss Confederation with a view to restricting the granting of residence permits for stays up to five years for nationals of eight EU Member States. This restriction, by introducing differentiation on the basis of nationality, is not only discriminatory but is also illegal under the 1999 Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the Swiss Confederation. Parliament also calls on the Commission to react to the proliferation of flanking measures which impose considerable restrictions on the work of EU SMEs seeking to provide services in Switzerland.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), in writing. – (LT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution on Swiss quotas on the number of residence permits granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary because the Federal Council of Switzerland decided to introduce as of 21 May 2012 quantitative limitations on category B residence permits for stays for up to five years granted to nationals of the countries mentioned. In taking this decision, the Swiss authorities recalled a so-called safeguard clause, enshrined in Article 10 of the 1999 Agreement, which allows them to introduce such temporary restrictive measures if, in a given year, the number of residence permits granted exceeds the average of the previous three years by at least 10%. The Swiss authorities declared that such situation had occurred in the case of nationals of the eight EU Member States and Switzerland has therefore adopted a number of so called flanking measures, accompanying the Free Movement of Persons Agreement (FMPA). It is very regrettable that the Swiss authorities decided to re-establish quantitative limitations on the long-term residence permits granted to EU citizens who are nationals of eight of the Member States that joined the EU in 2004, thus limiting the free movement of people as provided for in the 1999 Agreement with the EU. I consider this decision to be discriminatory and unlawful in that it finds no legal basis for any such national differentiation in the existing treaties between Switzerland and the EU. The Swiss authorities are therefore urged to review their decision and withdraw from the invocation of the safeguard clause. The Commission should examine the compatibility of this decision with the FMPA.

Philippe Juvin (PPE), in writing. – (FR) The Swiss Federal Council has decided to introduce, as of 1 May 2012, quantitative restrictions on the number of category B residence permits for stays of up to five years granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. This is a discriminatory, illegal decision, and there is no legal basis to justify the introduction of national differentiation of this nature under current treaties between the Swiss Confederation and the Union. For this reason we deplore the reintroduction of these quantitative restrictions and we urge the Swiss authorities, with this resolution, to review their decision and retract the invocation of the safeguard clause. This resolution was adopted by a large majority in plenary and I welcome that.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR), in writing. – (PL) I regard Switzerland's decision as discriminatory and unlawful. There is no basis in law for the re-introduction of limits on the number of long-term residence permits granted to EU citizens who hold citizenship of one of the eight Member States which joined the EU in 2004, and this would constitute a restriction on the free movement of persons as provided for under the 1999 agreement with the EU. Article 10 of the 1999 agreement, which contains the safeguard clause to which the Swiss authorities have referred, does not provide for any differentiation on the basis of citizenship. The Swiss authorities should immediately refrain from applying this safeguard clause.

Krišjānis Kariņš (PPE), *in writing.* – (LV) I supported the motion for a resolution on Swiss quotas on the number of residence permits granted, since I consider that Switzerland's decision to set quotas for specific EU Member States is unlawful and discriminatory. The Agreement on the free movement of persons concluded between Switzerland and the European Union in 1999 (henceforth referred to as 'the Agreement') provides for the possibility of imposing quotas on residence permits if, in a given year, the number of residence permits granted exceeds the average of the previous three years by at least 10%. This provision in the Agreement refers to both employed and self-employed persons of the European Community, not to the nationals of specific Member States. Therefore, to impose quotas on eight specific Member States is unacceptable. Similarly, I am opposed to other rules imposed by Switzerland, such as the guarantee of financial probity being demanded of cross-border service providers, and the intention to impose further rules on service providers, as this could significantly hinder the provision of services in Switzerland by EU businesses. Therefore, the EU and Switzerland should resolve the current situation as quickly as possible and together work out a system that would not impede the free movement of persons and services.

Sergej Kozlík (ALDE), *in writing.* – (SK) On 18 April 2012, the Swiss authorities decided to introduce quotas for the number of category B residence permits granted to citizens of eight countries, recalling a safeguard clause enshrined in Article 10 of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons of 1999 and the related provisions of the Protocol to the Agreement of 2004. I support the EP's critical resolution stating that the action taken by Switzerland against the eight EU Member States is not in accordance with the aforementioned documents. The EP does not consider it justified in any way to distinguish between the 25 EU Member States according to nationality. EP calls on the Commission to clarify whether the current Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons is an adequate and effective tool guaranteeing equal movement and conditions for all EU citizens and to accede to any changes. I therefore support the EP resolution in full.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) Switzerland's decision to restrict the number of residence permits (for stays of more than five years) and reintroduce restrictions for Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Hungary, is a violation of the legislation allowing free movement for the citizens of EU Member States. This decision could also have a negative impact on businesses (notably small and medium-sized enterprises) in Switzerland. I support the proposal that calls on Switzerland to revise the text adopted by the government, and I think the existence of the safeguard clause that turns the possibility of implementing new restrictions on the EU into a privilege that Switzerland can use at any moment is a matter of concern. The point towards which Switzerland is heading in its relationship with the EU is not advantageous for citizens of any Member State. The decision to disallow German and Austrian taxis to take passengers to Swiss airports is another proof of this country's abuse, since it is, once more, not compliant with the FMPA (the Free Movement of Persons Agreement).

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on Swiss quotas on the number of residence permits granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary, because it is unacceptable for Switzerland to decide, through its Federal Council, to introduce limitations on residence permits for citizens of these Member States starting from 1 May 2012. This decision is discriminatory and unlawful, since no legal basis for such national differentiation can be identified in the existing treaties between Switzerland and

the EU. Switzerland extended free movement rights to Bulgaria and Romania in Protocol II in 2008. This agreement foresees a transition period of up to seven years. In May 2011, the Swiss Government decided to extend the transitional period for Bulgarians and Romanians until 31 May 2014. This is unfortunate, because the extension of the Agreement to Romania and Bulgaria has led to an increased volume of trade with these countries, and has had a positive impact on Switzerland's economic growth. I think the Swiss authorities should review the decisions adopted with respect to Romania and Bulgaria, as well as to the other eight Member States which joined in 2004, and withdraw from the invocation of the safeguard clause.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for this report, which finds it deeply regrettable that the Swiss authorities decided to re-establish quantitative limitations on the long-term residence permits granted to EU citizens who are nationals of eight of the Member States that joined the EU in 2004, thus limiting the free movement of people as provided for in the 1999 agreement with the EU.

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) The decision by the Swiss authorities to reintroduce quantitative limitations on the long-term residence permits granted to citizens of Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary is both deplorable and worrying. It runs counter to the principle of free movement as set out in the 1999 agreement signed between the Swiss Confederation and the European Union. There must be greater cooperation and flexibility. However, it is hard to justify the reintroduction of quotas in this way.

Mario Mauro (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) In view of all the restrictions that the Swiss authorities have applied to EU citizens or businesses in several fields, EU-Swiss relations and the future evolution of Swiss participation in the single market require a regulatory framework providing economic operators from both sides with a more transparent and predictable environment.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The motion for a resolution on Switzerland's quotas for the number of residence permits granted to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary sets out the European Parliament's condemnation of the Swiss authorities' decision to cap the number of long-term residence permits granted to EU citizens from eight Member States that joined the EU in 2004, which obstructs the free movement of people provided for in Switzerland's 1999 agreement with the EU. I do not believe there is a reasonable legal basis for this decision and so I voted in favour of this resolution.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – The European Parliament asks the Commission to indicate what actions have been undertaken, since the adoption of the Parliament resolution of 7 September 2010, to solve the problems regarding the flanking measures which make it difficult for SMEs from the EU to provide services in Switzerland, and to convince the Swiss authorities to repeal regulations which oblige foreign enterprises providing cross-border services to deposit a guarantee of financial probity.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) A series of EU agreements have been concluded with the Swiss Federation, including in relation to freedom of movement. At the beginning of May 2012, the Swiss Parliament invoked a safeguard clause contained in the agreement and decided to introduce a limit on the number of residence permits issued to Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, Slovenian, Slovak, Czech and Hungarian nationals. For its part, the EU argues that the relevant clause is not applicable in this case because it is

disproportionate, regarding it as discriminatory and illegal. The decision on residence rights in its territory is, however, one of a state's most fundamental sovereignty rights. We must put a stop to the dominant tendency encountered in Brussels of trying to impose an almost open door policy. This is a very good example of how the EU is increasingly seeking to meddle in national affairs. I therefore naturally voted against this motion for a resolution.

Claudio Morganti (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted against this motion for a resolution, as I do not think it right for the European Union to interfere in a sovereign state's free choice of the procedure for granting residence permits. On the contrary, the Swiss Confederation has done well to impose quotas and strict rules: had we done that ourselves in the past, perhaps we would not have been 'invaded' by thousands of foreign nationals in search of work, which is often in short supply even for Italians. Switzerland is applying a pragmatic method, a far cry from the false do-goodism of Europe, which advocates open borders for all without carefully assessing the consequences. However, I agree with the point in the report that calls on Switzerland to facilitate access to the Swiss market for European small and medium-sized enterprises. In this instance it would be fair to insist on the principle of reciprocity, because if we open up our internal market we should expect similar treatment in return, as in this case there is no major danger of economic or social dumping.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour. It is important for the European Parliament to make its position clear. It is regrettable that this is not the first instance that we have been forced to examine a case of discrimination against workers from these eight EU Member States. Such tendencies, whereby during the economic downturn there are attempts to scapegoat workers from certain EU Member States, are very worrying. The decision by the Federal Council of Switzerland is sadly based on stereotypes, not economic logic. Instead of recognising the contribution these diligent people make to the country's economy, Switzerland has chosen the path of violating bilateral agreements with the EU and the spirit of cooperation with the EU. It is unacceptable for there to be a category of EU countries whose citizens are considered second-class or inferior. These countries are still called 'new EU Member States' or 'post-Soviet', but their performance in dealing with the economic crisis, financial discipline and saving policy is exemplary. The Swiss Government has taken the easiest, populist route, but in reality it is doubtful whether this measure will have the desired effect. This decision causes unlawful differentiation and discrimination towards the citizens of EU Member States, but will not reduce immigration. It is likely that the flow of immigration will simply change direction, labour costs will increase and there will be a fall in supply.

Alojz Peterle (PPE), *in writing*. – (SL) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution because I want Switzerland's attitude towards workers from the new Member States to be fully consistent with the commitments and legal framework agreed between the European Union and Switzerland respectively.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour. The motion for a resolution highlights the discriminatory nature of the new quotas and asks for progress on finding horizontal solutions to adapt agreements to the evolving EU *acquis*.

In particular, it calls for homogeneous interpretation of agreements, transparency of decision-making processes, independent surveillance, and judicial enforcement mechanisms. Given that the provisions of the agreement refer to 'employed and self-employed persons of the European Community', it asks whether it is legitimate to distinguish between Member States. The motion also stresses the importance of proper functioning of the internal market

and of deepening ties in order to overcome challenges in future relations between the EU and Switzerland in relation to the internal market.

Vilja Savisaar-Toomast (ALDE), *in writing.* – (ET) In today's vote, I supported the adoption of the resolution on Swiss quotas on the number of residence permits granted to citizens of Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. It is regrettable that Switzerland is once again not fulfilling its obligations, and wishes to participate in the European Union internal market only on the basis of rules that it finds suitable, and without fulfilling its own obligations. Surprisingly, all eight of these countries are Eastern European countries that acceded to the EU in 2004, and such discriminatory behaviour has no justification whatsoever. All of these countries have fulfilled the obligations they undertook in 2004 in the EU and under the Schengen visa system, and have thus earned equal treatment. I hope that the European Union and its institutions will not renege on the promises made to these countries and their citizens, and that their rights will also be guaranteed in Switzerland.

Monika Smolková (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) I supported the motion for a resolution on the Swiss quotas on the number of residence permits granted to nationals of eight countries, which include my country – Slovakia. It is inconceivable that in this day and age, we in Europe are divided into good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable. It is unacceptable to differentiate according to nationality. Switzerland has signed agreements with the EU and I consider this violation of the rights of EU citizens to be unprecedented. The actions of the Swiss Federal Council after the adoption of this document were also criticised by the Vice-President of the EC, and she called for an immediate response from the Commission. The commissioner is diplomatic when he consoles us by reminding us of the good partnership in which the EU accounts for 25% of trade with Switzerland. Violations of human rights and contractual rights cannot be justified by trade. We do not allow this for other countries, so why is Switzerland an exception? I believe that, after we have adopted our resolution, Switzerland will review its decision and not draw a dividing line between the EU Member States.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Switzerland's imposition of unilateral quotas on the number of residence permits granted to nationals of eight EU Member States, introduced on 18 April, contravenes the principles of the Schengen *acquis* by discriminating on the basis of nationality, specifically of Central and Eastern European citizens. The free movement of people is one of the main achievements of the European area and must not be put at risk for purely political reasons. In addition, Article 10, the safeguard clause, which allows quotas to be unilaterally introduced until 2014, should apply to all 27 Member States together. Further, this clause refers only to employed and self-employed persons and can only be applied if, over the course of a year, the number of residence permits granted exceeds the average of the previous three years by at least 10%. As these criteria have not been fully met, the Swiss authorities cannot argue that the safeguard clause should be applied. I believe that Switzerland should urgently review its position and, for once and for all, end discrimination in its immigration policy.

Rafał Trzaskowski (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) This motion for a resolution shows that the European Parliament can adopt a very coherent position in situations where discrimination is suffered by EU citizens, including Poles in this instance. Our aim is to make it clear that we will not agree to EU citizens receiving unequal treatment by third countries.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) In reality, movement between European Union countries is not uniform and the decision about this policy must respect the sovereignty of each Member State, which obviously presents no obstacle to the required cooperation on this issue at EU level. While defending the sovereignty of each Member State, however, we have to support the criticisms the resolution makes of the recent measures announced by Switzerland. At the same time, we must also criticise the way the resolution exploits this complaint to defend the single market, demonstrating that the concern has less to do with democracy and more to do with intensifying the process of European integration.

(The sitting was suspended at 12.50 and resumed at 15.00)

IN THE CHAIR: JACEK PROTASIEWICZ

Vice-President

13. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

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

15. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law(debate)

15.1. Venezuela: possible withdrawal from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on seven motions for resolutions on Venezuela ⁽³⁾ ⁽⁴⁾.

Ana Miranda , *author.* – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, we deeply regret that some issues are being dealt with as urgent topics.

This specific issue is not an urgent topic, because it is a likelihood that was announced in a ruling by the Supreme Court of Venezuela in 2008. It is not news, therefore.

The fact is that any excuse is used to take advantage of an issue at election time, whereas, in politics, ethics should always prevail over utilitarianism. Equity should always take priority over pre-established positions as regards governments that are democratically elected, whether we like them or not.

A procedural question has therefore been raised by the co-President of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance regarding the system of urgent debates in the European Parliament and its real effectiveness in achieving the purpose for which this instrument was created, that is, urgent debates in cases of violations of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. That does not apply in this case.

We value and support the existence of regional human rights instruments, such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. We regret the fact that 24 of the 34 members of the Organisation of American States (OAS) have not yet ratified these instruments for protecting human rights.

⁽³⁾ See Minutes.

⁽⁴⁾ See Minutes.

We believe that Venezuela is currently a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and a party to that convention, and that it also actively participates in the mechanisms of the United Nations Human Rights Council. We therefore support a strengthening of those regional human rights mechanisms and we call on the EU to increase its financial and technical contributions.

We take a very positive view of the work done by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in promoting full respect for social rights, and the rights of women and indigenous people, and in making their procedures more expeditious. We also encourage the government of Venezuela and the other members of the OAS to cooperate with these human rights mechanisms.

Véronique De Keyser, *author.* – (FR) Mr President, I would say, like my fellow MEP who has just spoken, that my group was somewhat surprised, not because Venezuela was the subject of an emergency motion, as we have had many of these in the case of Venezuela, but because this motion related to Venezuela's possible withdrawal from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

There are a great many emergencies in the world, and we are a little baffled by this motion, all the more so as the decision of whether or not belong to this Commission falls clearly under national jurisdiction.

Might I remind you that neither the United States nor Canada chose to belong to this Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. That triggered no response from Parliament, as far as I am aware.

Now, what does Venezuela have against this Commission? That it is politically biased, and has called the country to account much more over recent months than it had done, previously, over a period of 30 years, although the situation, according to Venezuela, has not deteriorated in any way.

Our position is very clear. We support the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; we would like to strengthen it; and we, in my group, are extremely attentive to what is happening in Venezuela. However, this motion, in light of everything else that is happening in the world today, really seems to be a distraction, if I may use that expression, from our Thursday afternoon session on human rights.

Renate Weber, *author.* – Mr President, I strongly disagree with my previous colleagues who spoke. I think the resolution we are about to vote on is very much in line with this Parliament's commitment to uphold human rights in Europe and outside Europe, and this is always a matter of urgency. International and regional human rights systems must be defended every time their normal and effective functioning is under threat. The Inter-American system has proven to be very effective in Latin and Central America, the Inter-American Commission being a highly respected institution. Therefore, a country's decision to leave it represents a genuine threat, the more so when such a decision is likely to influence other countries.

At the beginning of May Venezuela announced its decision to withdraw from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and in just a few days procedural steps have already been undertaken in this direction. This action is in line with the government's refusal for the last 10 years to allow any visit of the Inter-American Commission to the country, and it is also in line with the criticism expressed by the Venezuelan Government every time the Commission decided on human rights violation in Venezuela.

But the defence of human rights is precisely about holding governments accountable for their wrongdoing, the more so when the separation of powers within the state is almost non-existent and victims of human rights violation cannot find redress in their own country. In such cases international institutions are their only hope for justice.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Véronique De Keyser (S&D), *blue-card question.* – (FR) Mr President, might I ask Ms Weber whether Venezuela has withdrawn from the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, or whether, on the contrary, it has complied with the majority of this Council's orders in the regular review of the human rights situation?

Ms Weber, you have led us to believe that, as soon as anybody wished to leave an international human rights organisation, this automatically gave rise to an emergency motion. Might I ask you to tell us about the position of Venezuela at the UN Human Rights Security Council in Geneva, in the regular review of the human rights situation, and outline in what ways it has followed up on the observations made to it?

Renate Weber (ALDE), *blue-card answer.* – (FR) Ms De Keyser, I can give you the following response: we are talking about a State which has decided to leave a human rights organisation because it does not agree with its decisions. That is not proper, and is one way of undermining the authority of an international or regional human rights organisation.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

María Muñoz De Urquiza (S&D), *blue-card question.* – (ES) Mr President, Ms Weber, you said that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is a well-respected institution. It is so well respected that neither the United States nor Canada are members, and it is so well respected that eight further members of the Organisation of American States (OAS) are not part of it. What is more, it is so well respected that another country, without causing the least concern to your group, has withdrawn from the organisation. I am talking about Trinidad and Tobago.

Do you have anything to say on this matter? Or do you continue to state that it is well respected because Venezuela has announced the fact that it may withdraw?

Renate Weber (ALDE), *blue-card answer.* – (ES) Mr President, the fact that the other 10 members of the two American continents are not part of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights does not mean that it is not a very well-respected institution. I believe that the role it has played in Latin America and Central America is of great importance.

Cristian Dan Preda, *author.* – (RO) Mr President, I would like to begin by saying that, in my capacity of negotiator for the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) regarding this resolution, I invite you and all Members of Parliament to vote for the joint project of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group.

I have three reasons for this, as seen in today's meeting: the Socialists and the Greens, and I expect the Communists as well, would like to portray Chávez as champion of human rights, which is probably what will result from our meeting.

Secondly, I believe we must vote for the PPE-ALDE-ECR project because many of us, Members of this Parliament, fear for the quality of the Venezuelan political life. The decision to withdraw from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights means there will be nothing standing in Chávez's way when he attempts, as he has done before, to take control over state powers. Thirdly, there is the risk that this withdrawal leads to Ecuador's withdrawal, which would enable Venezuela and Ecuador to try to establish a parallel judicial system, favouring revolution to the detriment of human rights.

Inês Cristina Zuber, *author*. – (PT) Mr President, we would first like to raise a question of principle. The fact we are here today to discuss this subject is in itself inadmissible and unbelievable. It is unbelievable that the European Parliament as an institution has agreed to schedule a debate that has no purpose other than to interfere in, manipulate and influence the election process that will take place this year in Venezuela, the Presidential elections of October 2012.

The scheduling of this meeting by the European Parliament is an act of interference in the election process to come and signifies that this institution is being used for all-too-evident political purposes: to influence public opinion with regard to the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela during the pre-election campaign.

The European Parliament has demeaned itself as an institution by putting this on the agenda and has even brought itself into disrepute. It is important to clarify some things about the issue behind this debate, which we could describe as an act of right-wing election propaganda. Today Venezuela is a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The decision on whether to leave these organisations or not is the sole responsibility of the sovereign and democratic institutions and powers of Venezuela, and this Parliament has no right to interfere in this matter.

As has already been mentioned, of the 34 countries that make up the Organisation of American States only 24 have ratified the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and this has never worried this Parliament. The United States of America and Canada do not form part of the Commission and have never had any intention of joining. Again, the right-wing in this Parliament has never been perturbed by this.

The decision as to whether Venezuela should stop participating in this body is the sole responsibility of its government and its people. In any case, it would be strange if Venezuela was not raising this question. When the criminal and anti-democratic coup of 11 April 2002 took place, perpetrated by the most reactionary forces against the will of the Venezuelan people, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recognised the illegitimate Carmona government and the entire undemocratic situation created, in an attempt to legitimise a coup that had tried to depose an elected president.

Democracy was restored with the widespread support of the Venezuelan people, to the great regret of various American and European governments. This situation continues to stick in the throat of the right, as proved by this debate. That is why it has promoted allegedly urgent debates on Venezuela in this Parliament. Coincidentally, every one of them has been held in years in which elections have taken place in Venezuela.

If anyone who supports this inadmissible interference is truly concerned about human rights, they should know that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela actively participates in the United Nations Human Rights Council and that it is actively involved in setting up

human rights organisations under the framework of the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

If those supporting this inadmissible interference are truly concerned with human rights, why do they not propose a debate on the social advances that have taken place in Venezuela, particularly at the level of social rights? Why do they not discuss the reduction in poverty and extreme poverty, which has fallen from 17.1% to 7.9% in just 10 years?

Why do they not listen to the praise from the relevant officials of the FAO and UN regarding the enormous progress achieved in the right to food and the Millennium Development Goals?

This debate could be of some use for understanding that there are paths other than those advocated by the majority in Parliament and the governments of the European Union, where social, economic and labour rights – that is, human rights – are increasingly being attacked and undermined and where poverty is increasing at an alarming rate.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (LT) Mr President, I congratulate the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on its work defending human rights in American States and call on it to continue this work to guarantee human rights. I believe that we have to support regional human rights organisations and institutions because they are part of the international human rights system. At present the united support of the EU Member States and the EU institutions, as well as the European Parliament, is particularly important as the worrying news reaches us about the possible withdrawal of Venezuela from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. I would like to stress that, to my understanding, the Venezuelan Government's decision to withdraw from this system would aggravate the human rights situation and I therefore call on and invite the leaders of Venezuela to keep Venezuela a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

María Muñoz De Urquiza, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Mr President, I am very concerned that, with the number of serious human rights violations that are currently taking place around the world, we are devoting the platform of the European Parliament, which is so important in the defence of human rights, to the announcement that a country may be leaving an international human rights organisation. I find this worrying and, above all, I think this constitutes what is known as the 'political instrumentalisation of human rights', a misuse that is particularly disgraceful when we have not denounced the fact – and it does not even feature in the resolution put forward by the right-wing parties – that only 24 of the 34 member states of the Organisation of American States (OAS) are part of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Furthermore, those non-members include the United States and Canada, as well as eight other countries. What is more, the United States and Canada have not signed the protocols against torture and in favour of social rights either.

Other countries have left the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, such as Trinidad and Tobago, and nobody in this House was concerned enough to denounce that fact. Even within the EU there are Member States that have expressed their reservations and exceptions to the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and they are not under suspicion for that.

I would say to the groups on the right that they cannot play around with human rights or use human rights unjustly as if they were just another piece in the political game, if only for the sake of Parliament's credibility.

Please vote in favour of the resolution put forward by the progressive parties, because we support the International Commission on Human Rights but we do not criticise a country for something it has not yet done and, if it does so, it would be exercising its sovereignty.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE), *blue-card question*. – (RO) Mr President, I have a question for Ms Muñiz. What is the object of today's resolution, Venezuela or the United States? I thought it was Venezuela.

María Muñiz De Urquiza (S&D), *blue-card answer*. – (ES) Mr President, Mr Preda, unfortunately we are talking about Venezuela, which should not be the subject of a resolution on human rights violations, because it has limited itself to announcing that it may exercise what in international law is called *ius ad tractatum*, which is the option that states have, when exercising their sovereignty, to sign or not to sign international agreements.

However, as we are talking about an international body – which should be protected in order to defend human rights – let us strengthen it by calling on all those states that have not yet done so to join it and to recognise and implement the decisions and rulings of that body, which is not the case of the United States or Canada or eight other member states of the OAS, which are not members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. We therefore fail to understand why there is this obsession with Venezuela.

Eduard Kukan (PPE). – (SK) Mr President, the celebration of the democratic system and its control mechanisms is one of the main causes of the difficult situation concerning the protection of human rights in Venezuela. Without proper control, the State will undermine the right to freedom of expression and association and the rights of protectors of human rights to freely draw attention to their abuse, and will help the impunity of those who violate these basic human rights. The control mechanisms that would prevent this simply do not work in Venezuela. In my opinion, the attempts to withdraw from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights are another bad signal. Colleagues say that this is the right of every sovereign state. I would like to say that it is likewise my right, as a Member of the European Parliament who considers the human rights situation in Venezuela to be very bad, to express concern about this action of an independent State that will worsen the human rights situation even more.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – I think Hugo Chávez's proposal to withdraw from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission should be seen in context. Certainly, saying that the Inter-American Commission is a tool that the US uses against us is scarcely credible, and it is only right we should express our concerns about it. It should also be seen in the context of what has been happening in Venezuela under Chávez.

I happen to have a brother, a Catholic missionary, who has been based in Venezuela since 1979, so I am fairly familiar with what is actually happening on the ground. Certainly it is not ideal, as some people seem to suggest. There has been increasing control over the media, in particular, and in January 2010 five satellite and cable networks were ordered off the air. Also, life has been very difficult for opposition politicians.

I think it is very important for us to see that next October's elections are fair, so that if Chávez survives – which is unlikely in view of his state of health, from what I hear – there will be democracy, and not authoritarianism, in Venezuela.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, as part of these discussions on Venezuela's decision to withdraw from an inter-American human rights organisation, I would like to draw Parliament's attention to the fact that very important trade negotiations are currently under way between two trade blocks, the European Union and Mercosur, comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and that Venezuela is a candidate for accession to Mercosur. That might appear a little irrelevant, but I believe that we, ourselves, cannot work with areas which do not respect a body of rules of law.

We are clearly not going to interfere in the procedures for States to become members of Mercosur, in the same way that Mercosur has no right to intervene to decide whether Croatia joins the European Union or not. Nevertheless, in the negotiations between these two blocks, I feel that the European Union and South America should share in a common destiny. It would therefore be a very bad signal if Venezuela did not respect human rights, and that is an issue that this Inter-American Commission is meant to monitor.

Ana Gomes (S&D). – (PT) Mr President, President Chávez is undeniably a leader with popular support thanks to the social advances his presidency has brought to the overwhelming majority of the Venezuelan population. Having said that, he is also a demagogue and populist and, personally, I am not a fan. There are human rights violations in Venezuela. They are perhaps not as serious as in other countries, but they exist.

I have a great deal of respect for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. However, I do not think this resolution is justified, as any decision to leave is a sovereign decision. While it is one that can be criticised, it has not yet been taken and I hope it will not be taken.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE). – Mr President, first of all I would like to say that I fully support the joint resolution signed by my Group and other groups. If Venezuela withdraws from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, it will miss an important opportunity for constructive human rights dialogue, as well as for the improvement of human rights together with other Latin American states and partners. I am afraid that Venezuela's withdrawal from the Inter-American system could lead to its isolation and would not be good for the Venezuelan people – that is the most important point. I really hope that our doubts are 'early-warning' doubts.

Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, this debate has aroused strong feelings. I do not think that we need worry about compromising Venezuela's sovereignty in any way with a resolution of this kind. It is the European Parliament's right to express its opinion on this matter. We should take measures to strengthen regional human rights organisations, since they help to improve the human rights situation. If a large, important country such as Venezuela intends to withdraw from an organisation of this kind, and put it in a worse position in terms of its operations, it is Parliament's right to voice its criticism of this situation. Venezuela's sovereignty will not suffer in any way as a result, and so I will vote in favour of the motion for a resolution tabled by the Group of the European People's

Party (Christian Democrats), the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) Mr President, although I share the legitimate concerns of all those who have reservations about the establishment of a state committee to evaluate the possibility of the withdrawal of Venezuela from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, I fear that our views will not be crucial in the decision making of the state administration Venezuela. Great leaders of small countries often want to look like great leaders of large countries. Neither the United States of America nor Canada has signed the American Convention on Human Rights, and we therefore cannot be surprised when a leader of a small country decides to follow the example of a larger country. Especially when he feels that an institution that his country helped establish in good faith is today acting towards his country with hostility. In any case, however, we will have to continue to monitor closely the protection of human rights in the country, regardless of the final decision of the Chávez government. Especially because they are preparing for such a controversial decision.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, I am very worried about Venezuela's repeated threats to withdraw from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Chávez has done much to promote the rights of the indigenous peoples. He should now also take responsibility for his country's development in the area of the human rights of others. The situation is especially serious because human rights in Venezuela are at the very least fragile with regard to certain issues. Problems have included restrictions on freedom of expression, attacks against journalists and dissidents, the harassment of human rights defenders, poor prison conditions, and the absence of an independent legal system.

Now the Venezuelan President has sent a clear message that he does not intend to commit his country to human rights obligations. In addition, he has urged other countries to break away from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and to establish separate regional bodies. This is an alarming move, because this human rights system has specifically promoted the cause of democracy and the rule of law in many countries.

Vicente Miguel Garcés Ramón (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, I would like to express my indignation at this instrumental debate on a proposal that is trying to pass judgment on events that have not yet happened. It is a proposal based on a judgment of intentions, given that Venezuela has not left any human rights body; it has the aim of interfering tendentiously in the presidential election campaign in that country and it seeks to drag the European Parliament towards interfering in decision-making processes that are the sovereign responsibility of a sovereign nation.

Neither the people of Venezuela nor the democratic principles of the European Union deserve this inappropriate debate.

End of the catch-the-eye procedure

Janez Potočnik, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, honourable Members of the European Parliament, we are also concerned at Venezuela's announcement that it will start the procedure to evaluate the possibility of withdrawing from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The European External Action Service has already conveyed our concerns to the Venezuelan Ambassador in Brussels, encouraging Venezuela to continue fully cooperating with the regional and with the international human rights protection

mechanisms. We are monitoring the situation very closely and are staying in touch with the Organisation of American States and its members.

The Inter-American Commission and Court for Human Rights are instrumental in the promotion of democracy and the tackling of human rights abuses in the region. The EU has always supported the autonomous and integral character of the Inter-American Human Rights System. The EU is one of the Organisation of American States' largest voluntary donors and has assisted it in its efforts to strengthen democracy and promote human rights across the region. We underline the need for regional leadership in favour of the Inter-American Human Rights System. Countries within the region should actively manifest this support. This summit in Cochabamba is a good occasion to do so.

We are also following closely initiatives to create a new regional human rights system around UNASUR or the newly created Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. If such initiatives progress, it will be crucial that they are based on the same universally agreed human rights principles and comparable structures of competence and independence to the existing OAS human rights protection system, so as to avoid any weakening of the protection of human rights in the region.

At the same time I would like to underline that we are trying to engage Venezuela more actively. This could include deepening existing dialogues such as economic dialogue and opening new ones on energy and climate change.

Finally, EU readiness to mobilise an election observation mission to the October 2012 presidential elections, or alternatively an electoral experts' mission, has been reiterated to the President of the National Electoral Council on the 25 April. So far the Venezuelan electoral authorities have not communicated their position.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place shortly.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) I am deeply worried about a possible withdrawal of Venezuela from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. President Chávez's decision of 2 May 2012 to create a State Committee that analyses the possibility of such withdrawal is a step backward in terms of human rights protection. The Commission has constantly tried to raise awareness on the issue of human rights in the region, and has warned Venezuela several times with regard to violating the political rights of its citizens, such as the freedom of speech. We cannot approve of such actions, which are, nonetheless, supported by both the President of the Venezuelan Supreme Court and the Attorney General. Their stand undermines international legal rules, and is proof that the democratisation process in Venezuela has slackened. The EU must adopt a clear stand on this topic.

15.2. Azerbaijan (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on six motions for resolution on Azerbaijan ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽⁵⁾ See Minutes.

Raül Romeva i Rueda, *deputising for the author*. – Mr President, I speak on behalf of my colleague, Ulrike Lunacek. I have to admit that I am not a big fan of the Eurovision Song Contest but the fact that it is happening in a country with such a dramatic human rights situation has concerned me a lot.

Suppressing freedom of expression in Azerbaijan is simply incompatible with Azerbaijan's commitments regarding democracy and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Azerbaijani authorities should allow peaceful protests and prohibit all this interference in the work of journalists covering demonstrations. It is also important to release immediately from prison or pre-trial detention those detained on politically-motivated charges, including six journalists, social media activists, lawyers, NGO leaders and human right activists.

I also want to show my sympathy with the promoters of 'Sing for Democracy'. It is a campaign launched on the occasion of the Eurovision Song Contest hosted in Baku and they hope that their action can contribute to bringing about indispensable democratic reforms and substantial improvements in the human rights situation in the country.

I am also concerned about the forced evictions and demolitions of buildings in connection with the major reconstruction plan in Baku, partly linked to the upcoming Eurovision Song Contest. I thus call on the Azerbaijani authorities to guarantee that the ongoing construction of new buildings in Baku is in line with the relevant legislation and that the resettlement of people is carried out with transparent legal procedures and with fair compensation. Finally, I appreciate the fact that the PPE Group has finally joined the joint resolution as initially foreseen, as at certain times it was at risk.

Marietje Schaake, *author*. – Mr President, as the Eurovision finalists warm up their voices and practise their dance routines, the voices of the people in Azerbaijan are muffled. Much as the authorities may want to make the Eurovision Song Contest the 'Great Azerbaijan Show', the world is not blinded by glitter, glamour and propaganda.

We are very concerned at the ongoing violations of human rights in Azerbaijan, and polished statements from the government do not convince. It is only actions that speak. Today, two vice-chairs of the Müsavat party, a member of Liberal International, Tofiq Yaqublu and Gulaga Aslanli, were detained in the streets of Baku. Only one in six vice-chairs has not been arrested. An advisor of the party leader is under house arrest; people are being threatened by the authorities; Anar Gerayli has been missing for two days.

Arif Hajili and Tural Abbasli and various other human rights activists and members of the opposition have been detained for over a year. These people are recognised as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International and to them I want to say: 'We will not forget you'.

To the Azeri authorities I want to say: 'Live up to your responsibilities to respect human rights, and adhere to your commitments in the OSCE framework and in the context of the Association Agreement. Do you want to be a part of the EU Neighbourhood Policy or not?' Azerbaijan will have no credibility with the EU if it does not stick to its agreements: full stop!

Véronique De Keyser, *author*. – (FR) Mr President, some 10 days ago, when I was watching Euronews, I saw a magnificent broadcast about Azerbaijan which discussed the Eurovision Song contest. Not a word was said about human rights. All we saw was the Crystal Palace. I thought at first it was an advertisement, but no, it was a Euronews broadcast.

That is why today's motion for a resolution is extremely important. In no way do I support a boycott of Eurovision, which would, in any case, be very difficult to achieve, but we had the same discussion amongst ourselves over the Olympic Games in China. We decided that it offered a unique opportunity: 600 million viewers will watch this broadcast on Saturday. It is a unique opportunity to show that in Azerbaijan, besides gas, besides oil and besides money, there is another issue that is highly problematic, to say the least, and that is the human rights situation.

There is a further consideration: thousands of owners of flats and houses have been evicted to make way for the construction of the Eurovision buildings, and have received not much compensation. I think that this is beyond the pale. That is why I am particularly pleased by the fact that, ultimately, our friends in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) supported this resolution. It is absolutely essential.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Frank Engel (PPE), *blue-card question.* – (FR) Mr President, first of all I basically wanted to support you, Ms De Keyser, in the analysis you have just made of the situation. Furthermore, I wanted to ask you, as you are the first to have spoken along these lines, whether you might not also believe that, when we recently made our assessment of the Association Agreement with Azerbaijan, we adopted a position that largely disregarded everything we are discussing today. Would it not have been more useful to have made it clear right from the outset that Azerbaijan is still not yet like other democracies? We are probably working towards doing something today which is slightly different from what we did only a month ago.

Véronique De Keyser (S&D), *blue-card answer.* – (FR) I would not wish to 'let the cat out of the bag', as it were, Mr Engel, but what I can say is that we have not disregarded the human rights issue, in the groups at least. There has obviously been the question of *realpolitik*, in light of issues such as energy, our crisis and what Azerbaijan might mean to us in terms of pipelines to allow us to bypass Russia, and so on. You know the issue as well as I do. However, there is the argument that runs as follows: 'If we only signed agreements with countries that are true democracies, we might just run out of steam'. What I can say, in any case, is that not only was the issue of human rights raised, but that it remains absolutely central to us. I believe that one day we shall have to link – and that is essentially our ambition here in Europe – issues of trade to those of democracy. It is a constant balancing act to achieve this.

Monica Luisa Macovei, *author.* – (RO) Mr President, the cases of Idrak Abbasov and Khadija Ismaylova are just two examples of the pressure exerted on journalists in Azerbaijan. I call on the authorities to ensure the investigation and conviction of perpetrators, and also to investigate all claims of violence and arbitrary detentions against peaceful demonstrators, including this week's events. The immediate release of the persons detained on the basis of politically motivated charges, be they journalists, human rights activists, or any other person, is vital and in accordance with the basic rules on human rights protection.

I should remind you that Azerbaijan is member of the Council of Europe and signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights. Azerbaijan has also taken up a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council for the period 2012-2013, and, by this, it has committed to support the values expressed in the UN Human Rights Charter.

In conclusion, I expect the Azerbaijan authorities to comply with their commitments regarding human rights and I call upon them to do so.

Bernd Posselt, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, contrary to what has been expressed here, our group is a co-signatory to the resolution on Azerbaijan. This weekend, this House will be watching Baku closely. This will not be just because of the Eurovision Song Contest – despite the fact that one of our colleagues, Dana Scallan, won the Song Contest over 30 years ago. Our main reason for watching with interest is that Azerbaijan is an important partner of the European Union, a member the Council of Europe and a signatory to the European Human Rights Convention and is therefore more committed than other states to adhere to democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Azerbaijan has taken these steps voluntarily, which we welcome. That is why Azerbaijan must also accept closer scrutiny. I would like to state quite clearly that the actions prior to the Eurovision Song Contest – demolishing buildings, driving people out of their residential areas without paying compensation, the insufficient rule of law, the beating of demonstrators, the suppression of the freedom of the press and religious freedoms, the violation of human rights – are unacceptable specifically because Azerbaijan is an important and valuable partner for us.

Mitro Repo, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (FI) Mr President, the Eurovision Song Contest has definitely turned the media's attention to Azerbaijan for a while, and the Azerbaijanis have also taken advantage of the situation to demonstrate on the streets against the wretched state of their society and of freedom of speech there. Numerous people have actually been charged and imprisoned in Azerbaijan, having exercised their freedom of speech by condemning the country's Government.

The shadow of totalitarianism still hangs over Azerbaijan, and the development of democracy and a market economy that respects human rights still has a very long way to go. I would ask whether a country like Azerbaijan can ever act as a guardian of world peace, a rotating member of the UN Security Council, when it flagrantly violates the human rights of its own citizens.

The Azerbaijani authorities should repeal the provisions on blasphemy and slander in their Criminal Procedure Code and embark on major reforms to ensure that freedom of speech is exercised in Azerbaijan. The European External Action Service (EEAS) must insist that Azerbaijan should investigate all cases relating to restrictions on freedom of speech, and should also take practical measures in order to improve the situation with respect to human rights throughout the country and to release political prisoners.

Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – Mr President, in Baku last month I had the opportunity to ask President Aliyev about his plans for improving the situation with regard to democracy, human rights and freedom of the media in his country, especially as we look towards the Eurovision Song Contest this week. With astonishing self-confidence, he answered me that there was no reason to improve the situation because it was already perfect.

To be honest, I am not surprised by his self-confidence because, let us face it, the world, including the EU, is interested in Azerbaijan only because of gas and oil and important pipelines to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan; we are not interested in the people of Azerbaijan. Commissioner Füle may have criticised the Azeri human rights situation, but two weeks later President Barroso was in Baku, and he did not mention human rights once. He was

talking only about energy. So, is the message from the EU 'Never mind human rights – energy is what it's all about'?

If we continue to let energy interests take democracy and human rights hostage, the situation in Azerbaijan will never improve. Let us be honest: in the long term, the EU also secures its energy interests much better by fighting for a stable democracy in Azerbaijan than by supporting the current regime of President Aliyev.

Jaroslav Paška, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (SK) Mr President, Azerbaijan is a country that, under the Eastern Partnership programme, actively participates in the European neighbourhood policy, and as part of our political and economic convergence, negotiations on an association agreement are under way. Azerbaijan is also one of our major economic partners, and it is therefore natural that we are very sensitive to the political environment in the country. Where there are repeated signs of a deterioration in the area of human rights, it is thus our duty, in a friendly manner, to draw the attention of our partners to the fact that gubernatorial methods of intimidating journalists, NGOs and the political opposition are incompatible with a civilised and democratic form of government. An appropriate diplomatic notice concerning the harmonisation of legislation in Azerbaijan in the field of media, freedom of association, democratic elections and penalties for defamation with international standards would therefore certainly help to create a better legal framework for the peaceful transformation of society. Finding a suitable way of appealing effectively to the Azerbaijani authorities must therefore be a major challenge for our foreign service.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, Azerbaijan is now in the public eye, because the country is hosting the Eurovision Song Contest this spring. However, the news coverage has been mainly negative, as there is definitely room for improvement in the country's human rights situation. Problems have included restrictions on the media and on political activity in particular, and the difficulties that have been caused for the work of NGOs. Journalists, representatives of NGOs and active users of social media have been harassed, threatened and imprisoned.

The Azerbaijani Government has made many promises to improve the situation. It has published a National Action Plan on Human Rights, and has reformed its legislation in many ways. Recently, Azerbaijan set up a committee to investigate human rights violations. However, the government needs to ensure that the committee is absolutely impartial and that it conforms to international standards.

Azerbaijan is also one of the European neighbourhood policy partners. The country must promptly implement its National Action Plan on Human Rights under the neighbourhood policy, and demonstrate its sincerity with respect to the Association Agreement talks in progress.

I would like to say that I will be voting in favour of the resolution.

Corina Crețu (S&D). – (RO) Mr President, I think our resolution is useful, first of all because it places emphasis on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan and I hope the local authorities will take immediate action in order to comply with international commitments undertaken. Beyond its artistic side, hosting the Eurovision competition has also a powerful symbolic meaning for Azerbaijan, and, as it has already been said here, the fact that such an event has taken place in this country should not make us overlook the major violations of human rights. The restrictions imposed on peaceful demonstrations

and the intimidation actions carried out against independent journalists, as well as the non-transparent way in which certain properties have been expropriated are causes for concern.

I too call on the authorities in Azerbaijan to take action in order to tackle these situations, and, especially, stop all pressure exerted on the freedom of expression. Moreover, I call on the Commission and the other European institutions to strengthen their cooperation with Azerbaijan in order to encourage the respect of human rights in this country.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Metin Kazak (ALDE), *Blue-card question.* – (BG) Mr President, I would like to ask you the following, Ms Crețu. The questions you are asking are, of course, vitally important, but do you think that the urgency in this case is justified?

Given that we, as the European Union and Azerbaijan, are involved in many bilateral platforms such as the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, in addition to which Azerbaijan is a member of the Council of Europe, and all these long-standing issues are discussed broadly and at length, do you think that this resolution will help us resolve these problems?

Corina Crețu (S&D), *blue-card answer.* – (RO) Mr President, I believe that, when it comes to saving human lives and respecting human rights, it is never too soon or too late. On the other hand, I share your view regarding our duty to support this country's integration in the system of European values, but then again, I believe there is no justification for the events currently unfurling in Azerbaijan.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). – (RO) Mr President, I take the opportunity of this debate on an emergency resolution regarding Azerbaijan to call into question the status of these emergency resolutions. When were serious, fellow Members? When we voted the Association Report with Azerbaijan by overwhelming majority in this House? When were we serious? When our countries supported Azerbaijan in becoming a non-permanent member of the Security Council? When is it that we are serious? When we are asking Azerbaijan to support our energy policies through projects that may bring benefits to the European citizen? When is it that we are serious? Could it be during our countless and inefficient debates on human rights matters, which have no actual result whatsoever? In this resolution, like in so many others, we appeal to issues which have never been resolved, and which have been subject to more resolutions.

I believe beyond any doubt that Azerbaijan is not among the reputable countries in terms of respecting human rights, but I do believe that we are bound to withhold a certain standard in our own political views, a certain level of coherence and a certain type of approach, all of which should make us trustworthy in front of the European citizen. Let us not discuss human rights now, but instead vote for the access of the European Union to an energy policy favourable to the European citizen.

I think this discussion is very useful, but we must have another one, with a much wider scope, on precise criteria we apply to association agreements and suitable economic policies.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Bernd Posselt (PPE), *Blue-card question.* – (DE) Ms Nicolai, are you aware that we are not diplomats or business people, but rather parliamentarians whose primary concern is human rights? Are you also aware that this is a regular practice with partner states in the Council

of Europe, for example Russia and, this week, Ukraine? Of course we must pay attention to the human rights credentials of our partner states in particular.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE), blue-card answer. – (RO) I agree. I value your opinion, but I would be curious myself: did you vote in favour of the Association Agreement with Azerbaijan? For in that case as well, the condition was to respect human rights. This is precisely the matter at hand; the double standard in various attitudes and decisions.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, I am very pleased that the European Parliament is now jointly expressing its concern regarding the human rights situation in Azerbaijan, because the Eurovision Song Contest has put the country on the world map, and the public relations campaign that has cost millions of dollars is an attempt to present a modern, progressive image of the country. However, behind this sanitised façade there is another reality. There has been barely any change in the fundamental rights of the country's citizens during its 20 years of independence and relative stability. Instead, President Aliyev's regime has become stronger, and the international community has largely ignored the fact.

Although criticism of Azerbaijan has now been stepped up slightly, there is little criticism permitted within the country. Censorship is on the increase, and people are frequently punished for criticising the President or the country's leaders, whether this concerns policy towards the opposition, journalism, art, civil activism, education or even social media.

Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D). – (FI) Mr President, my thanks go to Ms Essayah and the other members of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), for its joint resolution. It is very important that, once again, the European Parliament is urging the Azerbaijani authorities to release political prisoners and all those who have been detained for political reasons.

I would also like to point out that the European Parliament will be monitoring developments in Azerbaijan very closely, especially after the Eurovision Song Contest. The competition is important, and I would encourage all the singers, artists and those taking part in this important contest to sing in favour of freeing political prisoners. For it is not really acceptable that people have to spend their lives in the grip of fear, or that the media, journalists, representatives of the opposition and human rights defenders live in fear.

Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, I support the motion for a resolution. We believe that it is very important for Azerbaijan, a country with a very long and fine history, and which is endeavouring to join the family of European nations in many different fields, as demonstrated by its participation in European sporting competitions, and also in another extremely important event, the Eurovision Song Contest. However, since Azerbaijan wishes to link its future with that of Europe, it should aim for European standards in terms of human rights. The human rights situation is unfortunately very poor, and getting worse. Since all the eyes of Europe will be on the country, now is a good time for us to voice our opinion on this matter and to send a powerful message to the Azerbaijani authorities. Thank you.

Tadeusz Zwiefka (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Commissioner, it is a simple fact that over the past 20 years, ever since Azerbaijan gained independence, we have witnessed extraordinary economic growth in this country, which is regarded as one of the most dynamically developing countries in the world. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same about the democratic process in Azerbaijan, since practices continue which unfortunately

still leave much to be desired, in particular as regards freedom of speech, in spite of this powerful and glorious economy. Whenever we cite examples of what is wrong in Azerbaijan, we must always remember to say that the independent media are unfortunately not accorded the position they deserve, and that journalists who dare to criticise the local or supreme authorities are immediately prosecuted. I would once again like to mention the case of Eynulla Fatullayev, who was sentenced to a total of eight years in prison for publishing two articles in the local press. These practices are absolutely unacceptable. I can only regret that the justified criticisms being voiced today were not given due attention during the Eastern Partnership summit which took place in Baku in April. Thank you.

Evgeni Kirilov (S&D). – Mr President, human rights and democracy building, particularly in the EU neighbourhood, are of paramount importance. As in other cases, if there are no urgent reasons we should not deal with them through these urgent procedures. Certainly, as colleagues pointed out, in the case of Azerbaijan there have been setbacks. But what is the urgency now?

It seems it is the upcoming Eurovision Song Contest. Colleagues express concern that the authorities might clamp down on their opponents after the contest. I fear the Azeri authorities will regard this resolution as a stab in the back on the eve of the contest, together with the stab they received from neighbouring Iran a day ago. As a result, I am afraid, this resolution will reinforce hardliners.

It would be wise to postpone the vote on this resolution and have a special debate in plenary together with Commissioner Füle. This could be a result-oriented approach, since the Azeri authorities, I am sure, will be aware of the present text of this motion.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

Bernd Posselt (PPE), *Blue-card question.* – (DE) Mr Kirilov, are you aware that the freedom demonstrators were on the streets for the whole week before the Eurovision Song Content, that they were baton-charged, and that our electorate witnessed it all on the television? They would be surprised to hear that you do not believe this to be an urgent matter, but that the question should be postponed until these people have been put in gaol.

Evgeni Kirilov (S&D), *Blue-card answer.* – Mr Posselt, yes, I am closely following the events in this country. I read today in the *International Herald Tribune* that yesterday a peaceful demonstration of young people against the regime passed through the main streets without permission.

There are certain things which have to be discussed very deeply and seriously with the authorities, but what I am saying is that this is not the way. Look how many people were here today! This is not the way to deal with a country which is quite important and is in a very strategic neighbourhood area of the Union.

Eduard Kukan (PPE). – (SK) Mr President, the protection of human rights, the promotion of democracy and the rule of law, and freedom of expression and association are fundamental principles on which the EU bases its policy towards its partners. This also applies to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is a partner country of the European Union, and it will therefore be monitored and – where justified – criticised in cases of human rights violations. The representatives of Azerbaijan should take such criticism very seriously. The issues that Azerbaijani officials should tackle promptly and openly include the organisation of peaceful protests and rallies and the detention of activists and journalists. Cases of attacks on journalists, civil society leaders and human rights activists should be resolved as soon as

possible. This is the minimum that we should demand from Azerbaijan as a partner country of the European Union, which is why we should now adopt this motion for a resolution.

Ana Gomes (S&D). – (PT) Mr President, it is regrettable that President Barroso went to Baku and kept quiet about the human rights situation in Azerbaijan, which has deteriorated despite the promises of reform and undertakings given to the EU.

These human rights violations, threats, attacks, imprisonment of journalists, violent repression of peaceful demonstrations and arbitrary expropriations are currently taking place under the spotlight of the Eurovision Song Contest.

In negotiating the Association Agreement with Azerbaijan, the European Union must include concrete clauses and objectives regarding democratic reforms to be realised during the period of the agreement, with particular regard to the freedoms of the press, of expression and to demonstrate. The agreement must include an effective mechanism for monitoring the reforms, including sanctions for failing to deliver.

Janez Potočnik, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, honourable members, European Union-Azerbaijan relations are far from having exploited their full potential. To provide for the country's political association and economic integration with the European Union, Azerbaijan needs to make significant further efforts to meet the action plan commitments in the field of deep and sustainable democracy, including electoral processes, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the independence of the judicial system. This assessment is clearly reflected in the ENP progress report issued on 15 May.

The heavy-handed suppression of a wave of moderate protest actions in March, and in particular of the rally in Baku on 2 April, signalled an important setback on the democratisation and human rights front, and signalled non-compliance with the commitments taken towards the EU and in the framework of the Council of Europe and the OSCE. At the same time, the EU welcomes the recent release on 16 May of Elnur Məcidli and hopes for further releases on the occasion of Republic Day on 28 May.

There are frequent reports of violations of property rights, with forced evictions, sometimes against previous court decisions, and without due notification. It remains to be seen how new rules on evictions adopted by the Council of Ministers on 27 February will be implemented and whether they will improve the situation.

Many of you have mentioned the Eurovision Song Contest, which offered a window of opportunity for the authorities. The opportunity seems to have been missed. On 16 May, at a conference on media freedom organised by the Sing for Democracy campaign, the government rejected any criticism but stated that in some individual cases of complaint due investigation is under way. This includes the case of Khadija Ismaylova, an investigative journalist who was harassed, with an attempt at blackmailing. Also on 16 May, during protest actions by the opposition, tens of activists were arrested and later released at a distance of 60 kilometres from Baku.

The media environment is curtailed by self-imposed censorship, and harassment of journalists is frequent. Recent examples include the detention of two journalists in the regional city of Quba and the arrest of a number of journalists on charges of spying for Iran. There are unfortunately many others.

As mentioned, Commissioner Füle's visit to Baku from 2 to 4 April, on the occasion of the Euronest meeting, gave the opportunity to highlight the EU's growing concerns about human rights at high political level. The EU reiterates the need for Azerbaijan to fully respect its commitments in the framework of the Council of Europe and the Eastern Partnership. As you know, the EU and Azerbaijan have a very substantial and comprehensive bilateral agenda. The main principle on which the EU builds relations with any country is respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. If the former is compromised then our cooperation loses its essence. There is full transparency concerning in what respect and how the EU assesses the human rights situation in any given country and, as I have already mentioned, the ENP progress report issued in May reflects this assessment clearly.

Finally, the full implementation of the European neighbourhood policy action plan is expected. Political prisoners should be freed, and freedom of assembly and expression should be guaranteed. The EU calls on Azerbaijan to extend an invitation to the Special Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for political prisoners.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place shortly.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Kristian Vigenin (S&D), *in writing.* – The urgency resolution proposed by several political groups on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan is a clear example of the shortcomings in the European Parliament's procedures and approach.

Respect for human rights is high on the EU agenda in its relations with third countries, especially as regards the immediate neighbourhood. The case of Azerbaijan is on the EU radar. The authorities do not deny the problems, they participate in a dialogue and try to address our concerns.

I personally believe that the 'urgency' procedure is not appropriate to tackle such complex problems, in the presence of a limited number of MEPs. The only reason I see to rush for such a resolution is the Eurovision Song Contest and the excellent PR opportunity for the EP to gain some visibility.

Such a superficial approach, however, undermines our consistent strategic policy towards the South Caucasus. All those who know more about Azerbaijan understand that this resolution will rather do harm to the human rights cause. Since we observe certain setbacks in most of the countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood, as a Chair of the Euronest Delegation of the EP I will ask for a special debate in plenary with Catherine Ashton and Stefan Füle.

15.3. Situation of North Korean refugees (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on six motions for resolution on the situation of North Korean refugees ⁽⁶⁾.

Gerald Häfner, *author.* – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, North Korea is generally only mentioned in the international media when it comes to our own security or the threat from North Korean nuclear weapons. I believe it is important that we should concern

⁽⁶⁾ See Minutes.

ourselves with this often forgotten country even when it is not our own safety that is at stake, but rather the safety of the people in the country and the way they live.

North Korea suffers terrible poverty and repression, as well as a lack of prospects for a positive future; almost every aspect of life is closely monitored. Dissidents can expect to be dispatched to labour camps, often accompanied by their entire families, and the whole country is like one big prison.

Citizens who have had enough of suffering, poverty and total repression, who think differently and wish to live differently, and who wish to emigrate or who manage to flee the country, for example to China, can expect to be delivered back into the hands of their oppressors on the basis of an agreement between China and North Korea signed in 1986.

I believe this is a great injustice and a form of joint culpability. China has signed the United Nations Refugee Convention and the associated protocols, and the Convention against Torture, and I believe that we should call on China in future to recognise refugees from North Korea as refugees '*sur place*', to protect their safety and their lives and to allow them to receive support within the country, including from NGOs, and to emigrate to a country of their choice.

Above all, however, I would call on the Republic of North Korea to stop its persecution of dissidents, to open up the country, to allow access for international observers and, finally, to give its citizens freedom and human rights. I also call on the United Nations to establish an investigative commission as the basis for possible further measures, including an examination of human rights in North Korea and, in particular, the issue of continuous, egregious crimes against the people of North Korea.

Kristiina Ojula, *author.* – Mr President, the totalitarian policies of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which have been used to oppress its citizens for over 60 years, have led to a great number of North Koreans fleeing to the People's Republic of China. Unfortunately, both People's Republics have taken an inhumane stance towards those refugees – the former placing the repatriated refugees in prison camps and subjecting them to forced labour, torture and even execution, and the latter arresting and returning them to North Korea, thus breaching the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The European Union must resolutely condemn this atrocious practice and raise it at all EU-China high-level talks, among the other human rights violations that have been repeatedly underlined by the European Parliament. I call on China to release all North Korean refugees from custody in order to seek asylum in third countries.

Frank Engel, *author.* – Mr President, as Gerald Häfner quite rightly said, North Korea is of concern to us mostly when the North Koreans are experimenting with nuclear weapons or with spacecraft, and all too rarely do we think about the terrible and indeed double predicament of the refugees that have fled this country.

Their predicament is double because first of all their vulnerability is immense. They normally come from indescribable material conditions and, when they make it to another country – and indeed China is the only option available in most cases – they have probably been in unspeakable distress for a long time. And, should they return or be returned, which is one of the problems that we address in the current resolution, their predicament would even increase, in that North Korea treats those that come back in a way that is often unimaginable, just because they previously wanted to flee.

These things are addressed in a comprehensive way in this resolution. The resolution is specifically about refugees. We are talking about thousands and thousands of people who have had no other choice but to flee their country because they do not even have anything to eat or to drink where they come from and they are often treated by China, which is the country that hosts most of them, in a way that is not exactly as we would want it to be.

This is also an appeal to China, whose help we need, to give these people the help that they require.

Sari Essayah, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (FI) Mr President, China regularly sends back North Korean refugees to their home country, where they are threatened with torture, forced labour and even execution.

Estimates suggest that over 20 000 North Koreans have fled the country since 1950, and the majority of them have defected specifically to China. Amnesty International, for example, has been monitoring the predicament of North Korean refugees in China for more than 10 years now, and has on several occasions reported on how the Chinese authorities treat them. China does not safeguard the human rights and refugee rights of North Koreans residing there. China intimidates refugees and those who help them, and has stopped refugees from entering the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Despite the fact that China is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and is party to the UN Refugee Convention, it defaults on its commitments and obligations in the international community.

Joanna Senyszyn, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (PL) Mr President, my group, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, has drafted a resolution which is very balanced, but which at the same time expresses our great concern for the citizens of North Korea and refugees from that country. Given the human rights violations committed by the North Korean authorities, we need to highlight the fact that torture, forced labour, the death penalty and public executions are unacceptable. We should call on the North Korean authorities to refrain from such practices, which constitute violations of human rights. At the same time, we should not tolerate the ill-treatment of refugees in places to which they flee.

It is absolutely vital to provide food and humanitarian aid to all citizens. The Commission should continue to support non-governmental organisations which help North Korea. At the same time, we should rigorously monitor the distribution of food and humanitarian aid in order to ensure that it takes place transparently and that it reaches those who need it most. Any sanctions imposed on the North Korean regime must not affect Korean citizens or refugees.

It is, of course, possible to query whether now is the best time to adopt such a resolution. It is worth remembering, however, that some people say that there is never a good time to fight for human rights, including the rights of refugees, while others say that it is always a good time to fight for them. Our view is that we should always fight for human rights, and always stand up in defence of those whose rights have been violated.

Jaroslav Paška, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (SK) Mr President, North Korea is one of the harshest dictatorships in the world. Every year, thousands of its citizens who do not share their leader's official delight at being able to live in his well-fenced reserve try to escape to a freer world. However, their road to freedom only passes through China, where Korean refugees often become victims of trafficking and, Korean women, sex slaves. If they seek

the protection of the Chinese authorities, they can expect to be deported back to the concentration camps in North Korea. Our polite but emphatic appeal to the Chinese Government, which has the option of giving priority to the UN Convention on Refugees over the repatriation agreement applied until now, could lead to an improvement in the situation of North Korean refugees. Under international law, refugee status would allow these people to work their way to a more dignified life in the civilised world. For this reason, we are obliged to make use of our foreign policy potential to influence the Chinese administration to stop repatriating North Korean refugees to camps of torture and death.

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, North Korea is, as my colleagues have already pointed out, a giant prison, where 150 000 to 200 000 political prisoners live in inhuman conditions. Some of them were born in detention camps, so they have never known freedom. By our resolution, we call on the Chinese authorities to stop cooperating with North Korea in chasing and returning North Koreans who manage to escape from this giant prison. North Koreans arriving in China must be treated as refugees requesting political asylum, and I hope that our Socialist colleagues will join the other political groups in supporting this reading. We also wish that Member States participate in developing an international protection system for these refugees. All they wish is respect for their fundamental rights.

Gerald Häfner (Verts/ALE), *Blue-card question to Ms Senyszyn under Rule 149(8)).* – (DE) Ms Senyszyn, even having heard your speech I fail to understand why the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats is unwilling to support this joint resolution. It is a good and established custom in this House that joint resolutions are framed on questions such as this. We also arrange to meet together in advance, which was also the case here. We have discussed all the issues and, as I understand it, have also reached agreement. At the end of the process, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats let it be known that they would not support the resolution. Having heard all you have to say, I can see no reason for this refusal, not that the timing is wrong, that the topic is wrong, or even that the resolution is aimed at the wrong audience. My question is therefore the following: what is your reason for abandoning cooperation over this specific issue?

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 149(8)).* – (PL) Mr President, in response to the question, I would like to make it clear that we believe that our resolution is more balanced, which means that it may achieve a better outcome than more aggressive resolutions. Thank you.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, I am alarmed by the increasing number of North Korean refugees. It is estimated that there are between 100 000 and 400 000 North Korean refugees worldwide. Many of them have to endure very harsh conditions, fearing for their lives or for the lives of those whom they have left behind. We are worried about the treatment to which 'illegal' economic immigrants are subjected on Chinese territory. They are, in fact, political refugees. We cannot approve of the Chinese Government's decision from March 2012 to repatriate North Korean refugees by force. There is evidence that such repatriations lead to torture and imprisonment. Therefore, we call on the Chinese Government to meet the obligations it has undertaken, especially those regarding the status of refugees and the 1984 Convention against Torture, and stop all forced repatriations.

Ana Gomes (S&D). – (PT) Mr President, the repatriation of refugees is against international law. It is unacceptable that it is being practised by a great power such as China, which has a special responsibility to comply with and enforce international law as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The Chinese authorities are well aware of this, so much so they have already promised to stop repatriating North Koreans who seek refuge in their country. However, it has been well documented that repatriation is continuing along the Chinese-Korean border and that this signifies that men, women, the elderly and children are being delivered up to torture, hunger, prison and death in North Korean concentration camps.

The European Union, which has a committed relationship with China on many levels, must not abandon its principles, values and permanent interests, and with all due loyalty and frankness it should tell China that it expects it to honour its obligations under the Geneva Convention. Refugees should no longer be handed over to North Korea. The High Representative and the Commission must include this matter in all of their political discussions with China, while continuing to support the organisations that provide assistance to North Korean refugees.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, the North Korean nuclear programme is a serious reason for concern in terms of international security, but it must not turn our attention away from the disastrous human rights situation in North Korea. The regime in Pyongyang seems to hold its own people captive. The precise number of people starving or locked up in concentration and re-education camps is unknown. Many of them try to run away out of despair, even though the risks are high for them, as well as for their families. The refugees from neighbouring countries have a right to protection and assistance from specialised organisations, as well as to an adequate status. I urge the entire international community not to turn a blind eye to the suffering of these people.

Mitro Repo (S&D). – (FI) Mr President, the situation regarding human rights in North Korea is a horrifying reminder of the yoke of totalitarianism, from which even Europe did not manage to free itself until the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Just as it was once believed that Cold War polarisation would go on forever, so too do the North Koreans see no end to their plight. For generations they have been born into and lived in a society that offers no hope of a better tomorrow. That is why it is extremely worrying that the Chinese authorities forcibly send back refugees arriving from North Korea, even though they will probably receive a prison sentence or, even more likely, the death sentence when they return.

In China, several people who have helped North Korean refugees have been arrested and convicted. The European External Action Service (EEAS) should act together with the Member States to achieve a comprehensive approach to the situation in North Korea. Power politics should not be allowed to ride roughshod over human suffering.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, the situation regarding North Korean refugees is very serious in humanitarian terms. There is hunger there, and for many this has meant that the only chance of survival is to go elsewhere. The North Korean Government should respond promptly to the food shortage, especially now that much of the foreign food aid has stopped as a consequence of the controversial guided missile that was launched.

Refugees arriving from North Korea must also be treated as asylum seekers in other countries. They should be offered safe transit, and they cannot be expelled under the

international Refugee Convention. Another serious problem is that if they are caught at the border, in most cases it means deportation, resulting in their being sent to a prison camp or receiving the death penalty, if, that is, the defectors are not shot at the border. Furthermore, almost without exception, their relatives who stay behind in the country are fiercely interrogated or even sent to prison camps themselves.

We are grateful to China for taking an internal decision to end the expulsions, but we would also ask China to dissolve its separate agreement with North Korea on the return of refugees. I hope that the matter will be raised in the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue.

Janez Potočnik, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, the situation on the Korean Peninsula presents many different concerns and challenges for the international community. These problems – regional tensions, illegal weapons programmes, human rights abuses – are interlinked and all warrant close attention from the EU.

Following the death of Kim Jong-il in December and the purported satellite launch in April, the focus in recent months has been heavily on the political succession in the DPRK and on regional security issues. However, we should not lose sight of the appalling human rights situation within the country. This is an issue on which the EU has for many years spoken out and played an active role, both at the United Nations and in our bilateral dialogue with the DPRK Government.

As the draft resolution reminds us, outside the DPRK's borders in neighbouring countries, there are also human rights concerns which merit our attention. The EU is seriously concerned about the forcible repatriation of North Korean asylum seekers and refugees. The EU realises very well that these DPRK citizens may face detention, torture and even execution upon their return.

For the EU, as a matter of principle, it is important that all countries fulfil their commitments under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Under these texts, adhering countries have specifically obliged themselves to refrain from returning people to their country of origin in cases where they might face the death penalty or torture, an obligation that already exists in general under customary international law.

Therefore the EU has been raising this issue with China, in particular in the framework of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue. As you know, China does not recognise the North Korean citizens entering its territory as refugees and regards them as economic migrants. We will continue to use every occasion to persuade the Chinese authorities to change this assessment. The next round of the human rights dialogue is scheduled for 29 May; this is less than a week from now.

The European Union, as a global political actor, will continue to follow all aspects of the situation on the Peninsula, working in close collaboration with its various strategic partners.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at the end of the debate.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Bogusław Sonik (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Despite repeated appeals by the international community, China continues to treat North Koreans as persons fleeing poverty instead of political refugees. If they are detained by the Chinese policy, the runaways are sent back to North Korea where they face prison and death. It is common knowledge that this

repatriation agreement constitutes a grave violation of human rights and runs counter to China's obligations under international law. It is my opinion that the international community cannot remain indifferent in the face of the Chinese Government's actions. As well as reiterating their appeals to the authorities of the Republic of China, the Member States should concentrate on developing a systematic approach to the organisation of European and international protection for North Korean fugitives, and support civil society organisations which help North Korean refugees.

16. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

16.1. Venezuela: possible withdrawal from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (B7-0239/2012) (vote)

16.2. Azerbaijan (B7-0252/2012) (vote)

16.3. Situation of North Korean refugees (B7-0241/2012) (vote)

President. - That concludes the vote.

17. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

18. Composition of Parliament: see Minutes

19. Decisions concerning certain documents: see Minutes

20. Written declarations included in the register (Rule 123): see Minutes

21. Forwarding of texts adopted during the sitting: see Minutes

22. Dates of forthcoming sittings: see Minutes

23. Adjournment of the session

President. – I declare the session of the European Parliament adjourned.

(The sitting closed at 16.40)